This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

BEGUMBAGH

A TALE OF THE INDIAN MUTINY

AND OTHER STORIES

W. & R. CHAMBERS
LONDON AND EDINBURGH

Royal Highland Yacht Club

LIBRARY.

.....

.....

.....

Not to be taken out of the Club.

NO MEMBER SHALL TAKE AWAY FROM THE CLUB, UPON ANY PRETENCE WHATSOEVER, ANY NEWSPAPER, PAMPHLET, BOOK OR OTHER ARTICLE THE PERTY OF THE CLUB.

BEGUMBAGH.--PAGE 39.

BEGUMBAGH

A TALE OF THE INDIAN MUTINY

AND OTHER STORIES

W. & R. CHAMBERS
LONDON AND EDINBURGH
1879

Ag. 6375.

Edinburgh:
Printed by W. and R. Chambers.

CONTENTS.

PAGE

BEGUMBAGH, A TALE OF THE INDIAN MUTINY..... 5

THROUGH FIRE AND WATER.....124

THE DETECTIVE IN AMERICA.....135

MY LEAVE OF ABSENCE.....156

THE RAFFLE FOR THE ELEPHANT.....179

BEGUMBAGH,

A TALE OF THE INDIAN MUTINY.

INTRODUCTION.

I'VE waited all these years, expecting some one or another would give a full and true account of it all; but little thinking it would ever come to be my task. For it's not in my way; but seeing how much has been said about other parts and other people's sufferings, while ours never so much as came in for a line of newspaper, I can't think it's fair; and as fairness is what I always did like, I set to, very much against my will; while, on account of my empty sleeve, the paper keeps slipping and sliding about, so that I can only hold it quiet by putting the lead inkstand on one corner, and my tobacco-jar on the other. You see, I'm not much at home at this sort of thing; and though, if you put a pipe and a glass of something before me, I could tell you all about it, taking my time, like, it seems that won't do. I said: 'Why don't you write it down as I tell it, so as other people could read all about it?' But 'No,' he says; 'I could do it in my fashion, but I want it to be in your simple unadorned style; so set to and do it.'

I daresay a good many of you know me—seen me often in Bond Street, at Facet's door—Facet's, you know, the great jeweller, where I stand and open carriages, or take messages, or small parcels with no end of valuables in them, for I'm trusted. Smith, my name is, Isaac Smith; and I'm that tallish, grisly fellow with the seam down one side of my face, my left sleeve looped up to my button, and not a speck to be seen on that 'commissionaire's' uniform, upon whose breast I've got three medals.

I was standing one day, waiting patiently for something to do, when a tallish gentleman came up, nodded as if he knew me well, and I saluted.

'Lose that limb in the Crimea, my man?' he said.

'No, sir. Mutiny,' I said, standing as stiff as use had made nature with me.

And then he asked me a lot more questions, and I answered him; and the end of it was that one evening I went to his house, and he had me in, and did what was wanted to set me off. I'd had a little bit of an itching to try something of the kind, I must own, for long enough, but his words started me; and in consequence I got a quire of the best foolscap paper, and a pen'orth of pens, and here's my story.

CHAPTER I.

Dub-dub-dub-dub-dub-dub. Just one light beat given by the boys in front—the light sharp tap upon their drums, to give the time for the march; and in heavy order there we were, her Majesty's 156th Regiment of Light Infantry, making our way over the dusty roads with the hot morning sun beating down upon our heads. We were marching very loosely, though, for the men were tired, and we were longing for the halt to be called, so that we might rest during the

heat of the day, and then go on again. Tents, baggage-wagons, women, children, elephants, all were there; and we were getting over the ground at the rate of about twenty miles a day, on our way up to the station, where we were to relieve a regiment going home.

I don't know what we should have done if it hadn't been for Harry Lant, the weather being very trying, almost as trying as our hot red coats and heavy knapsacks, and flower-pot busbies, with a round white ball like a child's plaything on the top; but no matter how tired he was, Harry Lant had always something to say or do, and even if the colonel was close by, he'd say or do it. Now, there happened to be an elephant walking along by our side, with the captain of our company, one of the lieutenants, and a couple of women in the howdah; while a black nigger fellow, in clean white calico clothes, and not much of 'em, and a muslin turban, and a good deal of it, was striddling on the creature's neck, rolling his eyes about, and flourishing an iron toasting-fork sort of thing, with which he drove the great flap-eared patient beast. The men were beginning to grumble gently, and shifting their guns from side to side, and sneezing, and coughing, and choking in the kicked-up dust, like a flock of sheep, when Captain Dyer scrambles down off the elephant, and takes his place alongside us, crying out cheerily: 'Only another mile, my lads, and then breakfast.'

We gave him a cheer, and another half-mile was got over, when once more the boys began to flag terribly, and even Harry Lant was silent, which, seeing what Harry Lant was, means a wonderful deal more respecting the weather than any number of degrees on a thermometer, I can tell you; but I looked round at him, and he knew what it meant, and, slipping out, he goes up to the elephant. 'Carry your trunk, sir,' he says; and taking gently hold of the great beast's soft nose, he laid it upon his shoulder, and marched on like that, with the men roaring with laughter.

'Pulla-wulla. Ma-pa-na,' shouted the nigger who was driving, or something that sounded like it, for of all the rum lingoes ever spoke, theirs is about the rummest, and always put me in mind of the fal-lal-la or tol-de-rol chorus of a song.

'All right. I'll take care!' sings out Harry; and on he marched, with the great soft-footed beast lifting its round pats and putting them down gently so as not to hurt Harry; and, trifling as that act was, it meant a great deal, as you'll see if you read on, while just then it got our poor fellows over the last half-mile without one falling out; and then the halt was called; men wheeled into line; we were dismissed; and soon after we were lounging about, under such shade as we could manage to get in the thin topes of trees.

CHAPTER II.

THAT'S a pretty busy time, that first half-hour after a halt: what with setting loosely up a few tents, and getting a fire lighted, and fetching water; but in spite of our being tired, we soon had things right. There was the colonel's tent, Colonel Maine's—a little stout man, that we all used to laugh at, because he was such a little, round, good-tempered chap, who never troubled about anything, for we hadn't learned then what was lying asleep in his brave little body, waiting to be brought out. Then there was the mess tent for the officers, and the hospital tent for those on the sick-list, beside our bell tents, that we shouldn't have set up at all, only to act as sun-shades. But, of course, the principal tent was the colonel's.

Well, there they were, the colonel and his lady, Mrs Maine—a nice, kindly-spoken, youngish woman: twenty years younger than he, she was; but, for all that, a happier

couple never breathed; and they two used to seem as if the regiment, and India, and all the natives were made on purpose to fall down and worship the two little golden idols they'd set up—a little girl and a little boy, you know. Cock Robin and Jenny Wren, we chaps used to call them, though Jenny Wren was about a year and a half the oldest. And I believe it was from living in France a bit, that the colonel's wife had got the notion of dressing them so; but it would have done your heart good to see those two children—the boy with his little red tunic and his sword, and the girl with her red jacket and belt, and a little canteen of wine and water, and a tiny tin mug; and them little things driving the old black ayah half-wild with the way they used to dodge away from her to get amongst the men, who took no end of delight in bamboozling the fat old woman when she was hunting for them; sending them here, and there, and everywhere, till she'd turn round and make signs with her hands, and spit on the ground, which was her way of cursing us. For I must say that we English were very, very careless about what we did or said to the natives. Officers and men, all alike, seemed to look upon them as something very little better than beasts, and talked to them as if they had no feelings at all, little thinking what fierce masters the trampled slaves could turn out, if ever they had their day—the day that the old proverb says is sure to come for every dog; and there was not a soul among us then that had the least bit of suspicion that the dog—by which, you know, I mean the Indian generally—was going mad, and sharpening those teeth of his ready to bite.

Well, as a matter of course, there were other people in our regiment that I ought to mention: Captain Dyer I did name; but there was a lieutenant, a very good-looking young fellow, who was a great favourite with Mrs Colonel Maine; and he dined a deal with them at all times, besides being a great chum of Captain Dyer's—they two shooting

together, and being like brothers, though there was a something in Lieutenant Leigh that I never seemed to take to. Then there was the doctor—a Welshman he was, and he used to make it his boast that our regiment was about the healthiest anywhere; and I tell you what it is, if you were ill once, and in hospital, as we call it—though, you know, with a marching regiment that only means anywhere till you get well—I say, if you were ill once, and under his hands, you'd think twice before you made up your mind to be ill again, and be very bad too before you went to him. Pestle, we used to call him, though his name was Hughes; and how we men did hate him, mortally, till we found out his real character, when we were lying cut to pieces almost, and him ready to cry over us at times as he tried to bring us round. 'Hold up, my lads,' he'd say, 'only another hour, and you'll be round the corner!' when what there was left of us did him justice. Then, of course, there were other officers, and some away with the major and another battalion of our regiment at Wallahbad; but they've nothing to do with my story.

I do not think I can do better than introduce you to our mess on the very morning of this halt, when, after cooling myself with a pipe, just the same as I should have warmed myself with a pipe if it had been in Canady or Nova Scotia, I walked up to find all ready for breakfast, and Mrs Bantem making the tea.

Some of the men didn't fail to laugh at us who took our tea for breakfast; but all the same I liked it, for it always took me home, tea did—and to the days when my poor old mother used to say that there never was such a boy for bread and butter as I was; not as there was ever so much butter that she need have grumbled, whatever I cost for bread; and though Mrs Bantem wasn't a bit like my mother, she brought up the homely thoughts. Mrs Bantem was, I should say, about the biggest and ugliest woman I ever saw

in my life. She stood five feet eleven and a half in her stockings, for Joe Bantem got Sergeant Buller to take her under the standard one day. She'd got a face nearly as dark as a black's; she'd got a moustache, and a good one too; and a great coarse look about her altogether. Measles —I'll tell you who he was directly—Measles used to say she was a horse god-mother; and they didn't seem to like one another; but Joe Bantem was as proud of that woman as she was of him; and if any one hinted about her looks, he used to laugh, and say that was only the outside rind, and talk about the juice. But all the same, though, no one couldn't be long with that woman without knowing her flavour. It was a sight to see her and Joe together, for he was just a nice middle size—five feet seven and a half—and as pretty a pink and white, brown-whiskered, open-faced man as ever you saw. We all got tanned and coppered over and over again, but Joe kept as nice and fresh and fair as on the day we embarked from Gosport years before; and the standing joke was that Mrs Bantem had a preparation for keeping his complexion all square.

Joe Bantem knew what he was about, though, for one day when a nasty remark had been made by the men of another regiment, he got talking to me in confidence over our pipes, and he swore that there wasn't a better woman living; and he was right, for I'm ready now at this present moment to take the Book in my hand, and swear the same thing before all the judges in Old England. For you see we're such duffers, we men: shew us a pretty bit of pink and white, and we run mad after it; while all the time we're running away from no end of what's solid and good, and true, and such as'll wear well, and shew fast colours, long after your pink and white's got faded and grimy. Not as I've much room to talk. But present company, you know, and setra. What, though, as a rule, does your pretty pink and white know about buttons, or darning, or cooking?

Why, we had the very best of cooking; not boiled tag and rag, but nice stews and roasts and hashes, when other men were growling over a dog's-meat dinner. We had the sweetest of clean sheets, and never a button off; our stockings were darned; and only let one of us—Measles, for instance—take a drop more than he ought, just see how she'd drop on to him, that's all. If his head didn't ache before, it would ache then; and I can see as plain now as if it was only this minute, instead of years ago, her boxing Measles' ears, and threatening to turn him out to another mess if he didn't keep sober. And she would have turned him over too, only, as she said to Joe, and Joe told me, it might have been the poor fellow's ruin, seeing how weak he was, and easily led away. The long and short of it is, Mrs Bantem was a good motherly woman of forty; and those who had anything to say against her, said it out of jealousy, and all I have to say now is what I've said before: she only had one fault, and that is, she never had any little Bantems to make wives for honest soldiers to come; and wherever she is, my wish is that she may live happy and venerable to a hundred.

That brings me to Measles. Bigley his name was; but he'd had the small-pox very bad when a child, through not being vaccinated; and his face was all picked out in holes, so round and smooth that you might have stood peas in them all over his cheeks and forehead, and they wouldn't have fallen off; so we called him Measles. If any of you say 'Why?' I don't know no more than I have said.

He was a sour-tempered sort of fellow was Measles, who listed because his sweetheart laughed at him; not that he cared for her, but he didn't like to be laughed at, so he listed out of spite, as he said, and that made him spiteful. He was always grumbling about not getting his promotion, and sneering at everything and everybody, and quarrelling with Harry Lant, him, you know, as carried the elephant's trunk; while Harry was never happy without he was

teasing him, so that sometimes there was a deal of hot water spilled in our mess.

And now I think I've only got to name three of the drum-boys, that Mrs Bantem ruled like a rod of iron, though all for their good, and then I've done.

Well, we had our breakfast, and thoroughly enjoyed it, sitting out there in the shade. Measles grumbled about the water, just because it happened to be better than usual; for sometimes we soldiers out there in India used to drink water that was terrible lively before it had been cooked in the kettle; for though water-insects out there can stand a deal of heat, they couldn't stand a fire. Mrs Bantem was washing up the things afterwards, and talking about dinner; Harry Lant was picking up all the odds and ends, to carry off to the great elephant, standing just then in the best bit of shade he could find, flapping his great ears about, blinking his little pig's eyes, and turning his trunk and his tail into two pendulums, swinging them backwards and forwards as regular as clockwork, and all the time watching Harry, when Measles says all at once: 'Here come some lunatics!'

CHAPTER III.

Now, after what I've told you about Measles' listing for spite, you will easily understand that the fact of his calling any one a lunatic did not prove a want of common reason in the person spoken about; but what he meant was, that the people coming up were half-mad for travelling when the sun was so high, and had got so much power.

I looked up and saw, about a mile off, coming over the long straight level plain, what seemed to be an elephant, and a man or two on horseback; and before I had been looking above a minute, I saw Captain Dyer cross over to the

colonel's tent, and then point in the direction of the coming elephant. The next minute, he crossed over to where we were. 'Seen Lieutenant Leigh?' he says in his quick way.

'No, sir; not since breakfast.'

'Send him after me, if he comes in sight. Tell him Miss Ross and party are yonder, and I've ridden on to meet them.'

The next minute he had gone, taken a horse from a sycee, and in spite of the heat, cantered off to meet the party with the elephant, the air being that clear that I could see him go right up, turn his horse round, and ride gently back by the elephant's side.

I did not see anything of the lieutenant, and, to tell the truth, I forgot all about him, for I was thinking about the party coming, for I had somehow heard a little about Mrs Maine's sister coming out from the old country to stay with her. If I recollect right, the black nurse told Mrs Bantem, and she mentioned it. This party, then, I supposed contained the lady herself; and it was as I thought. We had had to leave Patna unexpectedly to relieve the regiment ordered home; and the lady, according to orders, had followed us, for this was only our second day's march.

I suppose it was my pipe made me settle down to watch the coming party, and wonder what sort of a body Miss Ross would be, and whether anything like her sister. Then I wondered who would marry her, for, as you know, ladies are not very long out in India without picking up a husband. 'Perhaps,' I said to myself, 'it will be the lieutenant;' but ten minutes after, as the elephant shambled up, I altered my mind, for Captain Dyer was ambling along beside the great beast, and his was the hand that helped the lady down —a tall, handsome, self-possessed girl, who seemed quite to take the lead, and kiss and soothe the sister, when she ran out of the tent to throw her arms round the new-comer's neck.

'At last, then, Elsie,' Mrs Colonel said out aloud. 'You've had a long dreary ride.'

'Not during the last ten minutes,' Miss Ross said, laughing in a bright, merry, free-hearted way. 'Lieutenant Leigh has been welcoming me most cordially.'

'Who?' exclaimed Mrs Colonel, staring from one to the other.

'Lieutenant Leigh,' said Miss Ross.

'I'm afraid I am to blame for not announcing myself,' said Captain Dyer, lifting his muslin-covered cap. 'Your sister, Miss Ross, asked me to ride to meet you, in Lieutenant Leigh's absence.'

'You, then'——

'I am only Lawrence Dyer, his friend,' said the captain smiling.

It's a singular thing that just then, as I saw the young lady blush deeply, and Mrs Colonel look annoyed, I muttered to myself, 'Something will come of this,' because, if there's anything I hate, it's for a man to set himself up for a prophet. But it looked to me as if the captain had been taking Lieutenant Leigh's place, and that Miss Ross, as was really the case, though she had never seen him, had heard him so much talked of by her sister, that she had welcomed him, as she thought, quite as an old friend, when all the time she had been talking to Captain Dyer.

And I was not the only one who thought about it; else why did Mrs Colonel look annoyed, and the colonel, who came paddling out, exclaim loudly: 'Why, Leigh, look alive, man! here's Dyer been stealing a march upon you. Why, where have you been?'

I did not hear what the lieutenant said, for my attention was just then taken up by something else, but I saw him go up to Miss Ross, holding out his hand, while the meeting was very formal; but, as I told you, my attention was taken up by something else, and that something was a little, dark,

bright, eager, earnest face, with a pair of sharp eyes, and a little mocking-looking mouth; and as Captain Dyer had helped Miss Ross down with the steps from the howdah, so did I help down Lizzy Green, her maid; to get, by way of thanks, a half-saucy look, a nod of the head, and the sight of a pretty little tripping pair of ankles going over the hot sandy dust towards the tent.

But the next minute she was back, to ask about some luggage—a bullock-trunk or two—and she was coming up to me, as I eagerly stepped forward to meet her, when she seemed, as it were, to take it into her head to shy at me, going instead to Harry Lant, who had just come up, and who, on hearing what she wanted, placed his hands, with a grave swoop, upon his head, and made her a regular eastern salaam, ending by telling her that her slave would obey her commands. All of which seemed to grit upon me terribly; I didn't know why, then, but I found out afterwards, though not for many days to come.

We had the route given us for Begumbagh, a town that, in the old days, had been rather famous for its grandeur; but, from what I had heard, it was likely to turn out a very hot, dry, dusty, miserable spot; and I used to get reckoning up how long we should be frizzling out there in India before we got the orders for home; and put it at the lowest calculation, I could not make less of it than five years. At all events, we who were soldiers had made our own beds, and had to lie upon them, whether it was at home or abroad; and, as Mrs Bantem used to say to us, 'Where was the use of grumbling?' There were troubles in every life, even if it was a civilian's—as we soldiers always called those who didn't wear the Queen's uniform—and it was very doubtful whether we should have been a bit happier, if we had been in any other line. But all the same, government might have made things a little better for us in the way of suitable clothes, and things proper for the climate.

And so on we went: marching mornings and nights; camping all through the hot day; and it was not long before we found that, in Miss Ross, we men had got something else beside the children to worship.

But I may as well say now, and have it off my mind, that it has always struck me, that during those peaceful days, when our greatest worry was a hot march, we didn't know when we were well off, and that it wanted the troubles to come before we could see what good qualities there were in other people. Little trifling things used to make us sore—things such as we didn't notice afterwards, when great sorrows came. I know I was queer, and spiteful, and jealous, and no great wonder that, for I always was a man with a nastyish temper, and soon put out; but even Mrs Bantem used to shew that she wasn't quite perfect, for she quite upset me, one day, when Measles got talking at dinner about Lizzy Green, Miss Ross's maid, and, what was a wonderful thing for him, not finding fault. He got saying that she was a nice girl, and would make a soldier as wanted one a good wife; when Mrs Bantem fires up as spiteful as could be—I think, mind you, there'd been something wrong with the cooking that day, which had turned her a little—and she says that Lizzy was very well, but looks weren't everything, and that she was raw as raw, and would want no end of dressing before she would be good for anything; while, as to making a soldier's wife, soldiers had no business to have wives till they could buy themselves off, and turn civilians. Then, again, she seemed to have taken a sudden spite against Mrs Maine, saying that she was a poor, little, stuck-up, fine lady, and she could never have forgiven her if it had not been for those two beautiful children; though what Mrs Bantem had got to forgive the colonel's wife, I don't believe she even knew herself.

The old black ayah, too, got very much put out about this time, and all on account of the two new-comers; for when

Miss Ross hadn't got the children with her, they were along with Lizzy, who, like her mistress, was new to the climate, and hadn't got into that dull listless way that comes to people who have been some time up the country. They were all life, and fun, and energy, and the children were never happy when they were away; and of a morning, more to please Lizzy, I used to think, than the children, Harry Lant used to pick out a shady place, and then drive Chunder Chow, who was the mahout of *Nabob*, the principal elephant, half wild, by calling out his beast, and playing with him all sorts of antics. Chunder tried all he could to stop it, but it was of no use, for Harry had got such influence over that animal that when one day he was coaxing him out to lead him under some trees, and the mahout tried to stop him, *Nabob* makes no more ado, but lifts his great soft trunk, and rolls Mr Chunder Chow over into the grass, where he lay screeching like a parrot, and chattering like a monkey, rolling his opal eyeballs, and shewing his white teeth with fear, for he expected that *Nabob* was going to put his foot on him, and crush him to death, as is the nature of those great beasts. But not he: he only lays his trunk gently on Harry's shoulder, and follows him across the open like a great flesh-mountain, winking his little pig's eyes, whisking his tiny tail, and flapping his great ears; while the children clapped their hands as they stood in the shade with Miss Ross and Lizzy, and Captain Dyer and Lieutenant Leigh close behind.

'There's no call to be afraid, miss,' says Harry, saluting as he saw Miss Ross shrink back; and seeing how, when he said a few words in Hindustani, the great animal minded him, they stopped being afraid, and gave Harry fruit and cakes to feed the great beast with.

You see, out there in that great dull place, people are very glad to have any little trifle to amuse them, so you mustn't be surprised to hear that there used to be quite a crowd to

see Harry Lant's performances, as he called them. But all the same, I didn't like his upsetting old Chunder Chow; and it seemed to me even then, that we'd managed to make another black enemy—the black ayah being the first.

However, Harry used to go on making old *Nabob* kneel down, or shake hands, or curl up his trunk, or lift him up, finishing off by going up to his head, lifting one great ear, saying they understood one another, whispering a few words, and then shutting the ear up again, so as the words shouldn't be lost before they got into the elephant's brain, as Harry explained, because they'd got a long way to go. Then Harry would lie down, and let the great beast walk backwards and forwards all over him, lifting his great feet so carefully, and setting them down close to Harry, but never touching him, except one day when, just as the great beast was passing his foot over Harry's breast, a voice called out something in Hindustani—and I knew who it was, though I didn't see—when *Nabob* puts his feet down on Harry's chest, and Lizzy gave a great scream, and we all thought the poor chap would be crushed; but not he: the great beast was took by surprise, but only for an instant, and, in his slow quiet way, he steps aside, and then touches Harry all over with his trunk; and there was no more performance that day.

'I've got my knife into Master Chunder for that,' says Harry to me, 'for I'll swear that was his voice.' And I started to find he had known it.

'I wouldn't quarrel with him,' I says quietly, 'for it strikes me he's got his knife into you.'

'You've no idea,' says Harry, 'what a nip it was. I thought it was all over; but all the same, the poor brute didn't mean it, I'd swear.'

CHAPTER IV.

WHO could have thought just then that all that nonsense of Harry Lant's with the elephant was shaping itself for our good, but so it was, as you shall by-and-by hear. The march continued, matters seeming to go on very smoothly—but only seeming, mind you, for let alone that we were all walking upon a volcano, there was a good deal of unpleasantry brewing. Let alone my feeling that, somehow or another, Harry Lant was not so good a mate to me as he used to be, there was a good deal wrong between Captain Dyer and Lieutenant Leigh, and it soon seemed plain that there was much more peace and comfort in our camp a week earlier than there was at the time of which I am now writing.

I used to have my turns as sentry here and there; and it was when standing stock-still with my piece, that I used to see and hear so much—for in a camp it seems to be a custom for people to look upon a sentry as a something that can neither see nor hear anything but what might come in the shape of an enemy. They know he must not move from his post, which is to say that he's tied hand and foot, and perhaps from that they think that he's tied as to his senses. At all events, I got to see that when Miss Ross was seated in the colonel's tent, and Captain Dyer was near her, she seemed to grow gentle and quiet, and her eyes would light up, and her rich red lips part, as she listened to what he was saying; while, when it came to Lieutenant Leigh's turn, and he was beside her talking, she would be merry and chatty, and would laugh and talk as lively as could be. Harry Lant said it was because they were making up matters, and that some day she would be Mrs Leigh; but I didn't look at it in that light, though I said nothing.

I used to like to be sentry at the colonel's tent, on our halting for the night, when the canvas would be looped up, to let in the air, and they'd got their great globe-lamps lit, with the tops to them, to keep out the flies, and the draughts made by the punkahs swinging backwards and forwards. I used to think it quite a pretty sight, with the ladies and the three or four officers, perhaps chatting, perhaps having a little music, for Miss Ross could sing like—like a nightingale, I was going to say; but no nightingale that I ever heard could seem to lay hold of your heart and almost bring tears into your eyes, as she did. Then she used to sing duets with Captain Dyer, because the colonel wished it, though it was plain to see Mrs Maine didn't like it, any more than did Lieutenant Leigh, who, more than once, as I've seen, walked out, looking fierce and angry, to strike off right away from the camp, perhaps not to come back for a couple of hours.

It was one night when we'd been about a fortnight on the way, for during the past week the colonel had been letting us go on very easily, I was sentry at the tent. There had been some singing, and Lieutenant Leigh had gone off in the middle of a duet. Then the doctor, the colonel, and a couple of subs were busy over a game at whist, and the black nurse had beckoned Mrs Maine out, I suppose to see something about the two children; when Captain Dyer and Miss Ross walked together just outside the tent, she holding by one of the cords, and he standing close beside her.

They did not say much, but stood looking up at the bright silver moon and the twinkling stars; while he said a word now and then about the beauty of the scene, the white tents, the twinkling lights here and there, and the soft peaceful aspect of all around; and then his voice seemed to grow lower and deeper as he spoke from time to time, though I could hardly hear a word, as I stood there like a statue watching her beautiful face, with the great clusters of hair

knotted back from her broad white forehead, the moon shining full on it, and seeming to make her eyes flash as they were turned to him.

They must have stood there full half an hour, when she turned as if to go back, but he laid his hand upon hers as it held the tent cord, and said something very earnestly, when she turned to him again to look him full in the face, and I saw that her hand was not moved.

Then they were silent for a few seconds before he spoke again, loud enough for me to hear.

'I must ask you,' he said huskily; 'my peace depends upon it. I know that it has always been understood that you were to be introduced to Lieutenant Leigh. I can see now plainly enough what are your sister's wishes; but hearts are ungovernable, Miss Ross, and I tell you earnestly, as a simple, truth-speaking man, that you have roused feelings that until now slept quietly in my breast. If I am presumptuous, forgive me—love is bold as well as timid—but at least set me at rest: tell me, is there any engagement between you and Lieutenant Leigh?'

She did not speak for a few moments, but met his gaze—so it seemed to me—without shrinking, before saying one word, so softly, that it was like one of the whispers of the breeze crossing the plain—and that word was 'No!'

'God bless you for that answer, Miss Ross—Elsie,' he said deeply; and then his head was bent down for an instant over the hand that rested on the cord, before Miss Ross glided away from him into the tent, and went and stood resting with her hand upon the colonel's shoulder, when he, evidently in high glee, began to shew her his cards, laughing and pointing to first one, and then another, for he seemed to be having luck on his side.

But I had no more eyes then for the inside of the tent, for Captain Dyer just seemed to awaken to the fact that I was standing close by him as sentry, and he gave quite a start

as he looked at me for a few moments without speaking. Then he took a step forward.

'Who is this? Oh, thank goodness!' (he said those few words in an undertone, but I happened to hear them). 'Smith,' he said, 'I forgot there was a sentry there. You saw me talking to that lady?'

'Yes, sir,' I said.

'You saw everything?'

'Yes, sir.'

'And you heard all?'

'No, sir, not all; only what you said last.'

Then he was silent again for a few moments, but only to lay his hand directly after on my chest.

'Smith,' he said, 'I would rather you had not seen this; and if it had been any other man in my company, I should perhaps have offered him money, to insure that there was no idle chattering at the mess-tables; but you I ask, as a man I can trust, to give me your word of honour as a soldier to let what you have seen and heard be sacred.'

'Thank you, captain,' I said, speaking thick, for somehow his words seemed to touch me. 'You shan't repent trusting me.'

'I have no fear, Smith,' he said, speaking lightly, and as if he felt joyful, and proud, and happy.—'What a glorious night for a cigar;' and he took one out of his case, when we both started, for, as if he had that moment risen out of the ground, Lieutenant Leigh stood there close to us; and even to this day I can't make out how he managed it, but all the same he must have seen and heard as much as I had.

'And pray, is my word of honour as a soldier to be taken, Captain Dyer? or is my silence to be bought with money? —Confound you! come this way, will you!' he hissed; for Captain Dyer had half turned, as if to avoid him, but he stepped back directly, and I saw them walk off together

amongst the trees, till they were quite out of sight; and if ever I felt what it was to be tied down to one spot, I felt it then, as I walked sentry up and down by that tent watching for those two to return.

CHAPTER V.

Now, after giving my word of honour to hold all that sacred, some people may think I 'm breaking faith in telling what I saw; but I made that right by asking the colonel's leave—he is a colonel now—and he smiled, and said that I ought to change the names, and then it would not matter.

I left off my last chapter saying how I felt being tied down to one spot, as I kept guard there; and perhaps everybody don't know that a sentry's duty is to stay in the spot where he has been posted, and that leaving it lightly might, in time of war, mean death.

I should think I watched quite an hour, wondering whether I ought to give any alarm; but I was afraid it might look foolish, for perhaps after all it might only mean a bit of a quarrel, and I could not call to mind any quarrel between officers ending in a duel.

I was glad, too, that I did not say anything, for at last I saw them coming back in the clear moonlight—clear-like as day; and then in the distance they stopped, and in a moment one figure seemed to strike the other a sharp blow, which sent him staggering back, and I could not then see who it was that was hit, till they came nearer, and I made out that it was Captain Dyer; while, if I had any doubts at first, I could have none as they came nearer and nearer, with Lieutenant Leigh talking in a big insolent way at Captain Dyer, who was very quiet, holding his handkerchief to his cheek.

So as to be as near as possible to where they were going

to pass, I walked to the end of my tether, and, as they came up, Lieutenant Leigh says, in a nasty spiteful whisper: 'I should have thought you would have come into the tent to display the wound received in the lady's cause.'

'Leigh,' said Captain Dyer, taking down his white handkerchief—and in the bright moonlight I could see that his cheek was cut, and the handkerchief all bloody—'Leigh, that was an unmanly blow. You called me a coward; you struck me; and now you try to poison the wound with your words. I never lift hand against the man who has taken that hand in his as my friend, but the day may come when I can prove to you that you are a liar.'

Lieutenant Leigh turned upon him fiercely, as though he would have struck him again; but Captain Dyer paid no heed to him, only walked quietly off to his quarters; while, with a sneering, scornful sort of laugh, the lieutenant went into the colonel's tent; though, if he expected to see Miss Ross, he was disappointed, for so long as I was on guard, she did not shew any more that night.

Off again the next morning, and over a hotter and dustier road than ever; and I must say that I began to wish we were settled down in barracks again, for everything seemed to grow more and more crooked, and people more and more unpleasant. Why, even Mrs Bantem that morning before starting must shew her teeth, and snub Bantem, and then begin going on about the colonel's wife, and the fine madam, her sister, having all sorts of luxuries, while poor hard-working soldiers' wives had to bear all the burden and heat of the day; while, by way of winding up, she goes up to Harry Lant and Measles, who were, as usual, squabbling about something, and boxes both their ears, as if they had been bad boys. I saw them both colour up fierce; but the next minute Harry Lant bursts out laughing, and Measles does the same, and then they two did what I should think they never did before—they shook hands; but Mrs Bantem

had no sooner turned away with tears in her eyes, because she felt so cross, than the two chaps fell out again about some stupid thing or another, and kept on snarling and snapping at each other all along the march.

But there, bless you! that wasn't all: I saw Mrs Maine talking to her sister in a quick earnest sort of way, and they both seemed out of sorts; and the colonel swore at the tent-men, and bullied the adjutant, and he came round and dropped on to us, finding fault with the men's belts, and that upset the sergeants. Then some of the baggage didn't start right, and Lieutenant Leigh had to be taken to task by Captain Dyer, as in duty bound; while, when at last we were starting, if there wasn't a tremendous outcry, and the young colonel—little Cock Robin, you know—kicking, and screaming, and fighting the old black nurse, because he mightn't draw his little sword, and march alongside of Harry Lant!

Now, I'm very particular about putting all this down, because I want you to see how we all were one with the other, and how right through the battalion little things made us out of sorts with one another, and hardly friendly enough to speak, so that the difference may strike you, and you may see in a stronger light the alteration and the behaviour of people when trouble came.

All the same, though, I don't think it's possible for anybody to make a long march in India without getting out of temper. It's my belief that the grit does it, for you do have that terribly; and what with the heat, the dust, the thirst, the government boots, that always seem as if made not to fit anybody, and the grit, I believe even a regiment all chaplains would forget their trade.

Tramp, tramp, tramp, day after day, and nearly always over wide, dreary, dusty plains. Now we'd pass a few muddy paddy-fields, or come upon a river, but not often; and I many a time used to laugh grimly to myself, as I

thought what a very different place hot, dusty, dreary India was, to the glorious country I used to picture, all beautiful trees and flowers, and birds with dazzling plumage. There are bright places there, no doubt, but I never came across one, and my recollections of India are none of the most cheery.

But at last came the day when we were crossing a great wide-spread plain, in the middle of which seemed to be a few houses, with something bright here and there shining in the sun; and as we marched on, the cluster of houses appeared to grow and grow, till we halted at last in a market square of a good-sized town; and that night we were once more in barracks. But, for my part, I was more gritty than ever; for now we did not see the colonel's lady or her sister, though I may as well own that there was some one with them that I wanted to see more than either.

They were all, of course, at the colonel's quarters, a fine old palace of a place, with a court-yard, and a tank in the centre, and trees, and a flat roof, by the side of the great square; while on one side was another great rambling place, separated by a narrowish sort of alley, used for stores and hospital purposes; and on the other side, still going along by the side of the great market square, was another building, the very fellow to the colonel's quarters, but separated by a narrow footway, some ten feet wide, and this place was occupied by the officers.

Our barracks took up another side of the square; and on the others were mosques and flat-roofed buildings, and a sort of bazaar; while all round stretched away, in narrow streets, the houses of what we men used to call the niggers. Though, speaking for myself, I used to find them, when well treated, a nice, clean, gentle sort of people. I used to look upon them as a big sort of children, in their white muslin and calico, and their simple ways of playing-like at living; and even now I haven't altered my opinion of them in

general, for the great burst of frenzied passion that ran through so many of them was just like a child's uncontrolled rage.

Things were not long in settling down to the regular life: there was a little drill of a morning, and then, the rest of the day, the heat to fight with, which seemed to take all the moisture out of our bodies, and make us long for night.

I did not get put on as sentry once at the colonel's quarters, but I heard a little now and then from Mrs Bantem, who used to wash some of Mrs Maine's fine things, the black women doing everything else; and she'd often have a good grumble about 'her fine ladyship,' as she called her, and she'd pity her children. She used to pick up a good deal of information, though, and, taking a deal of interest as I did in Miss Ross, I got to know that it seemed to be quite a settled thing between her and Captain Dyer; and Bantem, who got took on now as Lieutenant Leigh's servant, used to tell his wife about how black those two used to seem one towards the other.

And so the time went on in a quiet sleepy way, the men getting lazier every day. There was nothing to stir us, only now and then we'd have a good laugh at Measles, who'd get one of his nasty fits on, and swear at all the officers round, saying he was as good as any of them, and that if he had his rights he would have been made an officer before then. Harry Lant, too, used to do his bit to make time pass away a little less dull, singing, telling stories, or getting up to some of his pranks with old *Nabob*, the elephant, making Chunder, the mahout, more mad than ever, for, no matter what he did or said, only let Harry make a sort of queer noise of his, and just like a great flesh-mountain, that elephant would come. It didn't matter who was in the way: regiment at drill, officer, rajah, anybody, old *Nabob* would come straight away to Harry, holding out his trunk

for fruit, or putting it in Harry's breast, where he'd find some bread or biscuit; and then the great brute would smooth him all over with his trunk, in a way that used to make Mrs Bantem say, that perhaps, after all, the natives weren't such fools as they looked, and that what they said about dead people going into animals' bodies might be true after all, for, if that great overgrown beast hadn't a soul of its own, and couldn't think, she didn't know nothing, so now then!

CHAPTER VI.

But it was always the same; and though time was when I could have laughed as merrily as did that little Jenny Wren of the colonel's at Harry's antics, I couldn't laugh now, because, it always seemed as if they were made an excuse to get Miss Ross and her maid out with the children.

A party of jugglers, or dancing-girls, or a man or two with pipes and snakes, were all very well; but I've known clever parties come round, and those I've named would hardly come out to look; and my heart, I suppose it was, if it wasn't my mind, got very sore about that time, and I used to get looking as evil at Harry Lant as Lieutenant Leigh did at the captain.

But it was a dreary time that, after all, one from which we were awakened in a sudden way, that startled us to a man.

First of all, there came a sort of shadowy rumour that something was wrong with the men of a native regiment, something to do with their caste; and before we had well realised that it was likely to be anything serious, sharp and swift came one bit of news after another, that the British officers in one native regiment had been shot down—here,

there, in all directions; and then we understood that what we had taken for the flash of a solitary fire, was the firing of a big train, and that there was a great mutiny in the land. And not, mind, the mutiny or riot of a mob of roughs, but of men drilled and disciplined by British officers, with leaders of their own caste, all well armed and provided with ammunition; and the talk round our mess when we heard all this was, How will it end?

I don't think there were many who did not realise the fact that something awful was coming to pass. Measles grinned, he did, and said that there was going to be an end of British tyranny in India, and that the natives were only going to seize their own again; but the next minute, although it was quite clean, he takes his piece out of the rack, cleans it thoroughly all over again, fixes the bayonet, feels the point, and then stands at the 'present!'

'I think we can let 'em know what's what, though, my lads, if they come here,' he says, with a grim smile; when Mrs Bantem, whose breath seemed quite taken away before by the way he talked, jumped up quite happy-like, laid her great hand upon his left side, and then, turning to us, she says: 'It's beating strong.'

'What is?' says Bantem, looking puzzled.

'Measles' heart,' says Mrs Bantem: 'and I always knew it was in the right place.'

The next minute she gave Measles a slap on the back as echoed through the place, sending him staggering forward; but he only laughed and said: 'Praise the saints, I ain't Bantem.'

There was a fine deal of excitement, though, now. The colonel seemed to wake up, and with him every officer, for we expected not only news but orders every moment. Discipline, if I may say so, was buckled up tight with the tongue in the last hole; provisions and water were got in; sentries doubled, and a strange feeling of distrust and fear came

upon all, for we soon saw that the people of the place hung away from us, and though, from such an inoffensive-looking lot as we had about us, there didn't seem much to fear, yet there was no knowing what treachery we might have to encounter, and as he had to think and act for others beside himself, Colonel Maine—God bless him—took every possible precaution against danger, then hidden, but which was likely to spring into sight at any moment.

There were not many English residents at Begumbagh, but what there were came into quarters directly; and the very next morning we learned plainly enough that there was danger threatening our place by the behaviour of the natives, who packed up their few things and filed out of the town as fast as they could, so that at noonday the market-place was deserted, and, save the few we had in quarters, there was not a black face to be seen.

The next morning came without news; and I was orderly, and standing waiting in the outer court close behind the colonel, who was holding a sort of council of war with the officers, when a sentry up in the broiling sun, on the roof, calls out that a horseman was coming; and before very long, covered with sweat and dust, an orderly dragoon dashes up, his horse all panting and blown, and then coming jingling and clanking in with those spurs and that sabre of his, he hands despatches to the colonel.

I hope I may be forgiven for what I thought then, but, as I watched his ruddy face, while he read those despatches, and saw it turn all of a sickly, greeny white, I gave him the credit of being a coward; and I was not the only one who did so. We all knew that, like us, he had never seen a shot fired in anger; and something like an angry feeling of vexation came over me, I know, as I thought of what a fellow he would be to handle and risk the lives of the four hundred men under his charge there at Begumbagh.

'D'yer think I'd look like that?' says a voice close

to my ear just then. 'D'yer think if I'd been made an officer, I'd ha' shewed the white-feather like that?' And turning round sharp, I saw it was Measles, who was standing sentry by the gateway; and he was so disgusted, that he spat about in all directions, for he was a man who didn't smoke, like any other Christian, but chewed his tobacco like a sailor.

Dyer,' says the colonel, the next moment, and they closed up together, but close to where we two stood—'Dyer,' he says, 'I never felt before that it would be hard to do my duty as a soldier; but, God help me, I shall have to leave Annie and the children.' There were a couple of tears rolling down the poor fellow's cheeks as he spoke, and he took Captain Dyer's hand.

'Look at him! Look there!' whispers Measles again; and I kicked out sharp behind, and hit him on the shin. 'He's a pretty sort of a'——

He didn't say any more just then, for, like me, he was staggered by the change that took place.

I think I've said Colonel Maine was a little, easy-going, pudgy man, with a red face; but just then, as he stood holding Captain Dyer's hand, a change seemed to come over him; he dropped the hand he had held, tightened his sword-belt, and then took a step forward, to stand thoughtful, with despatches in his left hand. It was then that I saw in a moment that I had wronged him, and I felt as if I could have gone down on the ground for him to have walked over me, for whatever he might have been in peace, easy-going, careless, and fond of idleness and good-living—come time for action, there he was with the true British officer flashing out of his face, his lips pinched, his eyes flashing, and a stern look upon his countenance that I had never seen before.

'Now then!' I says in a whisper to Measles. I didn't say anything else, for he knew what I meant. 'Now then —now then!'

'Well,' says Measles then, in a whisper, 'I s'pose women and children will bring the soft out of a man at a time like this; but, why! what did he mean by humbugging us like that!'

I should think Colonel Maine stood alone thoughtful and still in that court-yard, with the sun beating down upon his muslin-covered forage-cap, while you could slowly, and like a pendulum-beat, count thirty. It was a tremendously hot morning, with the sky a bright clear blue, and the shadows of a deep purply black cast down and cut as sharp as sharp. It was so still, too, that you could hear the whirring, whizzy noise of the cricket things, and now and then the champ, champ of the horse rattling his bit as he stood outside the gateway. It was a strange silence, that seemed to make itself felt; and then the colonel woke into life, stuck those despatches into his sword-belt, gave an order here, an order there, and the next minute—Tantaran-tantaran, *Tantaran-tantaran*, TANTARAN-TANTARAN, *Tantaran-tay*—the bugle was ringing out the assemblée, men were hurrying here and there, there was the trampling of feet, the court-yard was full of busy figures, shadows were passing backwards and forwards, and the news was abroad that our regiment was to form a flying column with another, and that we were off directly.

Ay, but it was exciting, that getting ready, and the time went like magic before we formed a hollow square, and the colonel said a few words to us, mounted as he was now, his voice firm as firm, except once, when I saw him glance at an upper window, and then it trembled, but only for an instant. His words were not many; and to this day, when I think of the scene under that hot blue sky, they come ringing back; for it did not seem to us that our old colonel was speaking, but a new man of a different mettle, though it was only that the right stuff had been sleeping in his breast, ready to be wakened by the bugle.

'My lads,' he said, and to a man we all burst out into a

ringing cheer, when he took off his cap, and waved it round —'My lads, this is a sharp call, but I've been expecting it, and it has not found us asleep. I thank you for the smart way in which you have answered it, for it shews me that a little easy-going on my part in the piping times of peace has not been taken advantage of. My lads, these are stern times; and this despatch tells me of what will bring the honest British blood into every face, and make every strong hand take a firm gripe of its piece as he longs for the order to charge the mutinous traitors to their Queen, who, taking her pay, sworn to serve her, have turned, and in cold blood butchered their officers, slain women, and hacked to pieces innocent babes. My lads, we are going against a horde of monsters; but I have bad news—you cannot all go'——

There was a murmur here.

'That murmur is not meant,' he continued; 'and I know it will be regretted when I explain myself. We have women here and children: mine—yours—and they must be protected' (it was here that his voice shook). 'Captain Dyer's company will garrison the place till our return, and to those men many of us leave all that is dear to us on earth. I have spoken. God save the Queen!'

How that place echoed with the hearty 'Hurray!' that rung out; and then it was, 'Fours right. March!' and only our company held firm, while I don't know whether I felt disappointed or pleased, till I happened to look up at one of the windows, to see Mrs Maine and Miss Ross, with those two poor little innocent children clapping their hands with delight at seeing the soldiers march away; one of them, the little girl, with her white muslin and scarlet sash over her shoulder, being held up by Lizzy Green; and then I did know that I was not disappointed, but glad I was to stay.

But to shew you how a man's heart changes about when it is blown by the hot breath of what you may call love, let

me tell you that only half a minute later, I was disappointed again at not going; and dared I have left the ranks, I'd have run after the departing column, for I caught Harry Lant looking up at that window, and I thought a handkerchief was waved to him.

Next minute, Captain Dyer calls out, 'Form four—deep. Right face. March!' and he led us to the gateway, but only to halt us there, for Measles, who was sentry, calls out something to him in a wild excited way.

'What do you want, man?' says Captain Dyer.

'O sir, if you'll only let me exchange. 'Taint too late. Let me go, captain.'

'How dare you, sir!' says Captain Dyer sternly, though I could see plainly enough it was only for discipline, for he was, I thought, pleased at Measles wanting to be in the thick of it. Then he shouts again to Measles: ''Tention—present arms!' and Measles falls into his right position for a sentry when troops are marching past. 'March!' says the captain again; and we marched into the market-place, and—all but those told off for sentries—we were dismissed; and Captain Dyer then stood talking earnestly to Lieutenant Leigh, for it had fallen out that they two, with a short company of eight-and-thirty rank and file, were to have the guarding of the women and children left in quarters at Begumbagh.

CHAPTER VII.

It seemed to me that, for the time being, Lieutenant Leigh was too much of a soldier to let private matters and personal feelings of enmity interfere with duty; and those two stood talking together for a good half-hour, when, having apparently made their plans, fatigue-parties were ordered out; and what I remember then thinking was a wise move, the

soldiers' wives and children in quarters were brought into the old palace, since it was the only likely spot for putting into something like a state of defence.

I have called it a palace, and I suppose that a rajah did once live in it, but, mind you, it was neither a very large nor a very grand place, being only a square of buildings, facing inward to a little court-yard, entered by a gateway, after the fashion of no end of buildings in the east.

Water we had in the tank, but provisions were brought in, and what sheep there were. Fortunately, there was a good supply of hay, and that we got in; but one thing we did not bargain for, and that was the company of the great elephant, *Nabob*, he having been left behind. And what does he do but come slowly up on those india-rubber cushion feet of his, and walk through the gateway, his back actually brushing against the top; and then, once in, he goes quietly over to where the hay was stacked, and coolly enough begins eating!

The men laughed, and some jokes were made about his taking up a deal of room, and I suppose, really, it was through Harry Lant that the great beast came in; but no more was said then, we all being so busy, and not one of us had the sense to see what a fearful strait that great inoffensive animal might bring us to.

I believe we all forgot about the heat that day as we worked on, slaving away at things that, in an ordinary way, we should have expected to be done by the niggers. Food, ammunition, wood, particularly planks, everything Captain Dyer thought likely to be of use; and soon a breastwork was made inside the gateway; such lower windows as looked outwards carefully nailed up, and loopholed for a shot at the enemy, should any appear; and when night did come at last, peaceful and still, the old palace was turned into a regular little fort.

We all knew that all this might be labour in vain, but all

the same it seemed to be our duty to get the place into as good a state of defence as we could, and under orders we did it. But, after all, we knew well enough that if the mutineers should bring up a small field-piece, they could knock the place about our ears in no time. Our hope, though, was that, at all events while our regiment was away, we might be unmolested, for, if the enemy came in any number, what could eight-and-thirty men do, hampered as they were with half-a-dozen children, and twice as many women? Not that all the women were likely to hamper us, for there was Mrs Bantem, busy as a bee, working here, comforting there, helping women to make themselves snug in different rooms; and once, as she came near me, she gave me one of her tremendous slaps on the back, her eyes twinkling with pleasure, and the perspiration streaming down her face the while. 'Ike Smith,' she says, 'this is something like, isn't it? But ask Captain Dyer to have that breastwork strengthened—there isn't half enough of it. Glad Bantem hasn't gone. But, I say, only think of that poor woman! I saw her just now crying, fit to break her poor heart.'

'What poor woman?' I said, staring hard.

'Why, the colonel's wife. Poor soul, it's pitiful to see her! it went through me like a knife.—What! are you there, my pretties?' she cried, flumping down on the stones as the colonel's two little ones came running out. 'Bless your pretty hearts, you'll come and say a word to old Mother Bantem, won't you?'

'What's everybody tying about?' says the little girl, in her prattling way. 'I don't like people to ty. Has my ma been whipped, and Aunt Elsie been naughty?'

'Look, look!' cries the boy excitedly; 'dere's old *Nabob!*' And toddling off, the next minute he was close to the great beast, his little sister running after him, to catch hold of his hand; and there the little mites stood close to, and staring up at the great elephant, as he kept on amusing himself by

twisting up a little hay in his trunk, and then lightly scattering it over his back, to get rid of the flies—for what nature could have been about to give him such a scrap of a tail, I can't understand. He'd work it, and flip it about hard enough; but as to getting rid of a fly, it's my belief that if insects can laugh, they laughed at it, as they watched him from where they were buzzing about the stone walls and windows in the hot sunshine.

The next minute, like a chorus, there came a scream from one of the upper windows, one from another, and a sort of howl from Mrs Bantem, and we all stood startled and staring, for what does Jenny Wren do, but, in a staggering way, lift up her little brother for him to touch the elephant's trunk, and then she stood laughing and clapping her hands with delight, seeing no fear, bless her! as that long, soft trunk was gently curled round the boy's waist, he was drawn out of his sister's arms; and then the great beast stood swinging the child to and fro, now up a little way, now down between his legs, and him crowing and laughing away all the while, as if it was the best fun that could be.

I believe we were all struck motionless; and it was like taking a hand away from my throat to let me breathe once more, when I saw the elephant gently drop the little fellow down on a heap of hay, but only for him to scramble up, and run forward shouting: 'Now 'gain, now 'gain;' and, as if *Nabob* understood his little prattling, half-tied tongue, he takes him up again, and swings him, just as there was a regular rush made, and Mrs Colonel, Miss Ross, Lizzy, and the captain and lieutenant came up.

'For Heaven's sake, save the child!' cries Mrs Maine.—'Mr Leigh, pray, do something.'

Miss Ross did not speak, but she looked at Captain Dyer; and those two young men both went at the elephant directly, to get the child away; but, in an instant, *Nabob* wheeled round, just the same as a stubborn donkey would at home

with a lot of boys teasing it; and then, as they dodged round his great carcass, he trumpeted fiercely, and began to shuffle off round the court.

I went up too, and so did Mrs Bantem, brave as a lion; but the great beast only kept on making his loud snorting noise, and shuffled along, with the boy in his trunk, swinging him backwards and forwards; and it was impossible to help thinking of what would be the consequence if the elephant should drop the little fellow, and then set on him one of his great feet.

It seemed as if nothing could be done, and once the idea —wild enough too—rushed into my head that it would be advisable to get a rifle put to the great beast's ear, and fire, when Measles shouted out from where he was on guard: 'Here's Chunder coming!' and, directly after, with his opal eye-balls rolling, and his dark, treacherous-looking face seeming to me all wicked and pleased at what was going on, came the mahout, and said a few words to the elephant, which stopped directly, and went down upon its knees. Chunder then tried to take hold of the child, but somehow that seemed to make the great beast furious, and getting up again, he began to grunt and make a noise after the fashion of a great pig, going on now faster round the court, and sending those who had come to look, and who stood in his way, fleeing in all directions.

Mrs Maine was half fainting, and, catching the little girl to her breast, I saw her go down upon her knees and hide her face, expecting, no doubt, every moment, that the next one would be her boy's last; and, indeed, we were all alarmed now, for the more we tried to get the little chap away, the fiercer the elephant grew; the only one who did not seem to mind being the boy himself, though his sister now began to cry, and in her little artless way I heard her ask her mother if the naughty elephant would eat Clivey.

I've often thought since that if we'd been quiet, and left

the beast alone, he would soon have set the child down; and I've often thought, too, that Mr Chunder could have got the boy away if he had liked, only he did nothing but tease and irritate the elephant, which was not the best of friends with him. But you will easily understand that there was not much time for thought then.

I had been doing my best along with the others, and then stood thinking what I could be at next, when I caught Lizzy Green's eye turned to me in an appealing, reproachful sort of way, that seemed to say as plainly as could be: 'Can't you do anything?' when all at once Measles shouts out: ''Arry, 'Arry!' and Harry Lant came up at the double, having been busy carrying arms out of the guard-room rack.

It was at one and the same moment that Harry Lant saw what was wrong, and that a cold dull chill ran through me, for I saw Lizzy clasp her hands together in a sort of thankful way, and it seemed to me then, as Harry ran up to the elephant, that he was always to be put before me, and that I was nobody, and the sooner I was out of the way the better.

All the same, though, I couldn't help admiring the way Harry ran up to the great brute, and did what none of us could manage. I quite hated him, I know, but yet I was proud of my mate, as he went up and says something to *Nabob*, and the elephant stands still. 'Put him down,' says Harry, pointing to the ground; and the great flesh-mountain puts the little fellow down. 'Now then,' says Harry, to the horror of the ladies, 'pick him up again;' and in a twinkling the great thing whips the boy up once more. 'Now, bring him up to the colonel's lady.' Well, if you'll believe me, if the great thing didn't follow Harry like a lamb, and carry the child up to where, half fainting, knelt poor Mrs Maine. 'Now, put him down,' says Harry; and the next moment little Clive Maine—Cock Robin, as we called him—was being hugged to his mother's breast. 'Now,

go down on your knees, and beg the ladies' pardon,' says Harry laughing. Down goes the elephant, and stops there, making a queer chuntering noise the while. 'Says he's very sorry, ma'am, and won't do so no more,' says Harry, serious as a judge; and in a moment, half laughing, half crying, Mrs Maine caught hold of Harry's hand, and kissed it, and then held it for a moment to her breast, sobbing hysterically as she did so.

'God bless you! You're a good man,' she cried; and then she broke down altogether; and Miss Ross, and Mrs Bantem, and Lizzy got round her, and helped her in.

I could see that Harry was touched, for one of his lips shook; but he tried to keep up the fun of the thing; and turning to the elephant, he says out loud: 'Now, get up, and go back to the hay; and don't you come no more of those games, that's all.'

The elephant got up directly, making a grunting noise as he did so.

'Why not?' says Harry, making-believe that that was what the great beast said. 'Because, if you do, I'll smash you. There!'

Officers and men, they all burst out laughing, to see little Harry Lant—a chap so little that he wouldn't have been in the regiment only that men were scarce, and the standard was very low when he listed—to see him standing shaking his fist at the great monster, one of whose legs was bigger than Harry altogether—stand shaking his fist in its face, and then take hold of the soft trunk and lead him away.

Perhaps I did, perhaps I didn't, but I thought I caught sight of a glance passing between Lizzy Green, now at one window, and Harry, leading off the elephant; but all the same I felt that jealous of him, and to hate him so that I could have quarrelled with him about nothing. It seemed as if he was always to come before me in everything.

And I wasn't the only one jealous of Harry, for no

sooner was the court pretty well empty, than he came slowly up towards me, in spite of my sour black looks, which he wouldn't notice; but before he could get to me, Chunder Chow, the mahout, goes up to the elephant, muttering and spiteful-like, with his hook-spear thing, that mahouts use to drive with; and being, I suppose, put out, and jealous, and annoyed at his authority being taken away, and another man doing what he couldn't, he gives the elephant a kick in the leg, and then hits him viciously with his iron hook thing.

Well! Bless you! it didn't take an instant, and it seemed to me that the elephant only gave that trunk of his a gentle swing against Chunder's side, and he was a couple of yards off, rolling over and over in the hay scattered about.

Up he jumps, wild as wild; and the first thing he catches sight of is Harry laughing fit to crack his sides, when Chunder rushes at him like a mad bull.

I suppose he expected to see Harry turn tail and run; but that being one of those things not included in drill, and a British soldier having a good deal of the machine about him, Harry stands fast, and Chunder pulls up short, grinning, rolling his eyes, and twisting his hands about, just for all the world like as if he was robbing a hen-roost, and wringing all the chickens' necks.

'Didn't hurt much, did it, blacky?' says Harry coolly. But the mahout couldn't speak for rage; but he kept spitting on the ground, and making signs, till really his face was anything but pretty to look at. And there he kept on, till, from laughing, Harry turned a bit nasty, for there was some one looking out of a window; and from being half-amused at what was going on, I once more felt all cold and bitter. But Harry fires up now, and makes towards Mr Chunder, who begins to retreat; and says Harry: 'Now I tell you what it is, young man; I never did you any ill

turn; and if I choose to have a bit of fun with the elephant, it's government property, and as much mine as yours. But look ye here—if you come cussing, and spitting, and swearing at me again in your nasty heathen dialect, why, if I don't—— No,' he says, stopping short, and half-turning to me, 'I can't black his eyes, Isaac, for they're black enough already; but let him come any more of it, and, jiggermaree, if I don't bung 'em!'

CHAPTER VIII.

CHUNDER didn't like the looks of Harry, I suppose, so he walked off, turning once to spit and curse, like that turn-coat chap, Shimei, that you read of in the Bible; and we two walked off together towards our quarters.

'I ain't going to stand any of his nonsense,' says Harry.

'It's bad making enemies now, Harry,' I said gruffly. And just then up comes Measles, who had been relieved, for his spell was up now, and another party were on, else he would have had to be in the guard-room.

'There never was such an unlucky beggar as me,' says Measles. 'If a chance does turn up for earning a bit of promotion, it's always some one else gets it. Come on, lads, and let's see what Mother Bantem's got in the pot.'

'You'll perhaps have a chance before long of earning your bit of promotion without going out,' I says.

'Ike Smith's turned prophet and croaker in ornary,' says Harry, laughing. 'I believe he expects we're going to have a new siege of Seringapatam here, only back'ards way on.'

'Only wish some of 'em would come this way, says

Measles grimly; and he made a sort of offer, and a hit out at some imaginary enemy.

'Here they are,' says Joe Bantem, as we walked in. 'Curry for dinner, lads—look alive.'

'What, my little hero!' says Mrs Bantem, fetching Harry one of her slaps on the back. 'My word, you're in fine plume with the colonel's lady.'

Slap came her hand down again on Harry's back; and as soon as he could get wind: 'Oh, I say, don't,' says Harry. 'Thank goodness, I ain't a married man.—Is she often as affectionate as this with you, Joe?'

Joe Bantem laughed; and soon after we were all making, in spite of threatened trouble and disappointment, an uncommonly hearty dinner, for, if there ever was a woman who could make a good curry, it was Mrs Bantem; and many's the cold winter's day I've stood in Facet's door there in Bond Street, and longed for a plateful. Pearls stewed in sunshine, Harry Lant used to call it; and really to see the beautiful, glistening, white rice, every grain tender as tender, and yet dry and ready to roll away from the others—none of your mosh-posh rice, if Mrs Bantem boiled it—and then the rich golden curry itself: there, I've known that woman turn one of the toughest old native cocks into what you'd have sworn was a delicate young Dorking chick—that is, so long as you didn't get hold of a drumstick, which perhaps would be a bit ropy. That woman was a regular blessing to our mess, and we fellows said so, many a time.

One, two, three days passed without any news, and we in our quarters were quiet as if thousands of miles from the rest of the world. The town kept as deserted as ever, and it seemed almost startling to me when I was posted sentry on the roof, after looking out over the wide, sandy, dusty plain, over which the sunshine was quivering and dancing, to peer down amongst the little ramshackle native huts

without a sign of life amongst them, and it took but little thought for me to come to the conclusion that the natives knew of something terrible about to happen, and had made that their reason for going away. Though, all the same, it might have been from dread lest we should seek to visit upon them and theirs the horrors that had elsewhere befallen the British.

I used often to think, too, that Captain Dyer had some such feelings as mine, for he looked very, very serious and anxious, and he'd spend hours on the roof with his glass, Miss Ross often being by his side, while Lieutenant Leigh used to watch them in a strange way, when he thought no one was observing him.

I've often thought that when people get touched with that queer complaint folks call love, they get into a curious half-delirious way, that makes them fancy that people are nearly blind, and have their eyes shut to what they do or say. I fancy there was something of this kind with Miss Ross, and I'm sure there was with me when I used to go hanging about, trying to get a word with Lizzy; and, of course, shut up as we all were then, often having the chance, but getting seldom anything but a few cold answers, and a sort of show of fear of me whenever I was near to her.

But what troubled me as much as anything was the behaviour of the four Indians we had shut up with us—Chunder Chow, the old black nurse, and two more—for they grew more uppish and bounceable every day, refusing to work, until Captain Dyer had one of the men tied up to the triangles and flogged, down in a great cellar or vault place that there was under the north end of the palace, so that the ladies and women shouldn't hear his cries. He deserved all he got, as I can answer for, and that made the rest a little more civil, but not for long; and, just the day before something happened, I took the liberty of saluting

Captain Dyer, after he had been giving me some orders, and took that chance of speaking my mind.

'Captain,' I says, 'I don't think those black folks are to be trusted.'

'Neither do I, Smith,' he says. 'But what have you to tell me?'

'Nothing at all, captain, only that I have my eye on them; and I've been thinking that they must somehow or another have held communication outside; and I don't like it, for those people don't get what we call cheeky without cause.'

'Keep both eyes on them then, Smith,' says Captain Dyer, smiling; 'and, no matter what it is—if it is the most trivial thing in any way connected with them, report it.'

'I will, sir,' I says; and the very next day, much against the grain, I did have something to report.

CHAPTER IX.

THE next morning was hotter, I think, than ever, with no prospect either of rain or change; and, after doing what little work I had to get over, it struck me that I might as well attend to what Captain Dyer advised—give two eyes to Chunder and his friends; so I left Mrs Bantem busy over her cooking, and went down into the court.

All below was as still as death—sunshine here, shadow there, but, through one of the windows, open to catch the least breeze that might be on the way, and taking in instead the hot, sultry air, came now and then the silvery laughter of the children—that pleasant cheery sound that makes the most rugged old face grow a trifle smoother.

I looked here, and I looked there, but could only see old *Nabob* amusing himself with the hay, a sentry on the

roof to the east, and another on the roof to the west, and one in the gateway, broiling almost, all of them, with the heat.

The ladies and the children were seldom seen now, for they were in trouble; and Mrs Maine was worn almost to skin and bone with anxiety, as she sat waiting for tidings of the expedition.

Not knowing what to do with myself, I sauntered along by where there was a slip of shade, and entered the south side of the palace—an old half-ruinous part; and after going first into one, and then into another of the bare empty rooms, I picked out what seemed to be the coolest corner I could find, sat down with my back propped against the wall, filled and lit my pipe, and then putting things together in my mind, thoroughly enjoyed a good smoke.

There was something wonderfully soothing in that bit of tobacco, and it appeared to me cooling, comforting, and to make my bit of a love-affair seem not so bad as it was. So, on the strength of that, I refilled, and was about half-way through another pipe, when things began to grow very dim round about me, and I was wandering about in my dreams, and nodding that head of mine in the most curious and wild way you can think of. What I dreamed about most was about getting married to Lizzy Green; and in what must have been a very short space, that event was coming off at least half-a-dozen times over, only *Nabob*, the elephant, would come in at an awkward time and put a stop to it. But at last, in my dreamy fashion, it seemed to me that matters were smoothed over, and he consented to put down the child, and, flapping his ears, promised he'd say yes. But in my stupid, confused muddle, I thought that he'd no sooner put down the child with his trunk than he wheeled round and took him up with his tail; and so on, backwards and forwards, when, getting quite out of patience,

I caught Lizzy's hand in mine, saying: 'Never mind the elephant—let's have it over;' and she gave a sharp scream.

I jumped to my feet, biting off and swallowing a bit of pipe-shank as I did so, and then stood drenched with perspiration, listening to a scuffling noise in the next room; when, shaking off the stupid confused feeling, I ran towards the door just as another scream—not a loud, but a faint excited scream—rang in my ears, and the next moment Lizzy Green was sobbing and crying in my arms, and that black thief Chunder was crawling on his hands and knees to the door, where he got up, holding his fist to his mouth, and then he turned upon me such a look as I have never forgotten.

I don't wonder at the people of old painting devils with black faces, for I don't know anything more devilish-looking than a black's phiz when it is drawn with rage, and the eyes are rolling about, now all black flash, now all white, while the grinning ivories below seem to be grinding and ready to tear you in pieces.

It was after that fashion that Chunder looked at me as he turned at the door; but I was then only thinking of the trembling, frightened girl I held in my arms, trying at the same time to whisper a few gentle words, while I had hard work to keep from pressing my lips to her white forehead.

But the next minute she disengaged herself from my grasp, and held out her little white hand to me, thanking me as sweetly as thanks could be given.

'Perhaps you had better not say a word about it,' she whispered. 'He 's come under pretence of seeing the nurse, and been rude to me once or twice before. I came here to sit at that window with my work, and did not see him come behind me.'

I started as she spoke about that open window, for it looked out upon the spot where I sometimes stood sentry;

but then, Harry Lant sometimes stood just in the same place, and I don't know whether it was a strange impression caused by his coming, that made me think of him, but just then there were footsteps, and, with his pipe in his mouth, and fatigue-jacket all unbuttoned, Harry entered the room.

'Beg pardon; didn't know it was engaged,' he says lightly, as he stepped back; and then he stopped, for Lizzy called to him by his name.

'Please walk back with me to Mrs Maine's quarters,' she said softly; and once more holding her hand out to me, with her eyes cast down, she thanked me; and the question I had been asking myself—Did she love Harry Lant better than me?—was to my mind answered, and I gave a groan as I saw them walk off together, for it struck me then that they had engaged to meet in that room, only Harry Lant was late.

'Never mind,' I says to myself; 'I've done a comrade a good turn.' And then I thought more and more of there being a feeling in the blacks' minds that their day was coming, or that ill-looking scoundrel would never have dared to insult a white woman in open day.

Ten minutes after, I was on my way to Captain Dyer, for, in spite of what Lizzy had said, I felt that, being under orders, it was my duty to report all that occurred with the blacks; for we might at any time have been under siege, and to have had unknown and treacherous enemies in the camp would have been ruin indeed.

'Well, Smith,' he said, smiling as I entered and saluted, 'what news of the enemy?'

'Not much, sir,' I said; what I had to tell, going, as I have before said, very much against the grain. 'I was in one of the empty rooms on the south side, when I heard a scream, and running up, I found it was Miss Ross'——

'What!' he roared, in a voice that would have startled a stronger man than I.

'Miss Ross's maid, sir, with that black fellow Chunder, the mahout, trying to kiss her.'

'Well?' he said, with a black angry look overspreading his face.

'Well, sir,' I said, feeling quite red as I spoke, 'he kissed my fist instead—that 's all.'

Captain Dyer began to walk up and down, playing with one of the buttons on his breast, as was his way when eager and excited.

'Now, Smith,' he said at last, stopping short before me, 'what does that mean?'

'Mean, sir?' I said, feeling quite as excited as himself. 'Well, sir, if you ask me, I say that if it was in time of peace and quiet, it would only mean that it was a bit of his black—— I beg your pardon, captain,' I says, stopping short, for, you see, it was quite time.

'Go on, Smith,' he said quietly.

'His black impudence, sir.'

'But, as it is not in time of peace and quiet, Smith?' he said, looking me through and through.

'Well, sir,' I said, 'I don't want to croak, nor for other people to believe what I say; but it seems to me that that black fellow's kicking out of the ranks means a good deal; and I take it that he is excited with the news that he has somehow got hold of—news that is getting into his head like so much green 'rack. I 've thought of it some little time now, sir; and it strikes me that if, instead of our short company being Englishmen, they were all Chunder Chows, before to-morrow morning, begging your pardon, Captain Dyer and Lieutenant Leigh would have said "Right wheel" for the last time.'

'And the women and children!' he muttered softly: but I heard him.

He did not speak then for quite half a minute, when he turned to me with a pleasant smile.

'But you see, though, Smith,' he said, 'our short company is made up of different stuff; and therefore there 's some hope for us yet; but—— Ah, Leigh, did you hear what he said?'

'Yes,' said the lieutenant, who had been standing at the door for a few moments, scowling at us both.

'Well, what do you think?' said Captain Dyer.

'Think?' said Lieutenant Leigh contemptuously, as he turned away—'nothing!'

'But,' said Captain Dyer quietly, 'really I think there is much truth in what he, an observant man, says.'

There was a challenge from the roof just then; and we all went out to find that a mounted man was in sight; and on the captain making use of his glass, I heard him tell Lieutenant Leigh that it was an orderly dragoon.

A few minutes after, it was plain enough to everybody; and soon, man and horse dead beat, the orderly with a despatch trotted into the court.

It was a sight worth seeing, to look upon Mrs Maine clutching at the letter enclosed for her in Captain Dyer's despatch. Poor woman! it was a treasure to her—one that made her pant as she hurriedly snatched it from the captain's hand, for all formality was forgotten in those days; and then she hurried away to where her sister was waiting to hear the news.

CHAPTER X.

THE orderly took back a despatch from Captain Dyer, starting at daybreak the next morning; but before then, we all knew that matters were getting to wear a terrible aspect. At first, I had been disposed to think that the orderly was romancing, and giving us a few travellers' tales; but I soon found out that he was in earnest; and more than once I felt

a shiver as he sat with our mess, telling us of how regiment after regiment had mutinied and murdered their officers; how station after station had been plundered, collectors butchered, and their wives and daughters sometimes cut down, sometimes carried off by the wretches, who had made a sport of throwing infants from one to the other on their bayonets.

'I never had any children,' sobbed Mrs Bantem then; 'and I never wished to have any; for they're not right for soldiers' wives; but only to think—the poor sweet, suffering little things. Oh, if I'd only been a man, and been there!'

We none of us said anything; but I believe all thought as I did, that if Mrs Bantem had been there, she'd have done as much—ah, perhaps more—than some men would have done. Often, since then, as I think of it, and recall it from the bygone, there I can see Mother Bantem—though why we called her mother, I don't know, unless it was because she was like a mother to us—with her great strapping form; and think of the way in which she'——

Halt! Retire by fours from the left.

Just in time; for I find handling my pen's like handling a commander-in-chief's staff, and that I've got letters which make words, which make phrases, which make sentences, which make paragraphs, which make chapters, which make up the whole story: and that is for all the world like the army with its privates made into companies, and battalions, and regiments, and brigades. Well, there you are: if you don't have discipline, and every private in his right place, where are you? Just so with me; my words were coming out in the wrong places, and in another minute I should have spoiled my story, by letting you know what was coming at the wrong time.

Well, we all felt very deeply the news brought in by that orderly, for soldiers are not such harum-scarum roughs as some people seem to imagine. For the most part, they're

men with the same feelings as civilians; and I don't think many of us slept very sound that night, feeling as we did what a charge we had, and that we might be attacked at any time; and a good deal of my anxiety was on account of Lizzy Green; for even if she wouldn't be my wife, but Harry Lant's, I could not help taking a wonderful deal of interest in her.

But all the same it was a terribly awkward time, as you must own, for falling in love; and I don't know hardly whom I pitied most, Captain Dyer or myself; but think I had more leanings towards number one, because Captain Dyer was happy; though, perhaps, I might have been; only like lots more hot sighing noodles, I never once thought of asking the girl if she'd have me. As for Lieutenant Leigh, I never once thought of giving him a bit of pity, for I did not think he deserved it.

Well, the trooper started off at daybreak, so as to get well on his journey in the early morning; and about an hour after he was gone, I had a fancy to go into the old ruined room again, where there was the bit of a scene I've told you of. My orders from Captain Dyer were, to watch Chunder strictly, both as to seeing that he did not again insult any of the women, and also to see if he had any little game of his own that he was playing on the sly; for though Lieutenant Leigh, on being told, pooh-poohed it all, and advised a flogging, Captain Dyer had his suspicions—stronger ones, it seemed, than mine; and hence my orders and my being excused from mounting guard.

It was all very still, and cool, and quiet as I walked from room to room, slowly and thoughtfully, stopping to pick up my broken pipe, which lay where I had dropped it; and then going on into the next room, where, under the window, lay the bit of cotton cobweb and cat's-cradle work Lizzy had been doing, and had left behind. I gave a bit of a gulp as I picked that up, and I was tucking it inside my jacket when I stopped short, for I thought I heard a whisper.

I listened, and there it was again—a low, earnest whispering of first one and then another voice in the next room, whose wide broken doorway stood open, for there wasn't a bit of woodwork left.

I have heard about people saying, that in some great surprise or fright, their hearts stood still; but I don't believe it, because it always strikes me that, when a person's heart does stand still, it never goes on again. All the same, though, my heart felt then as if it did stand still with the dead, dull, miserable feeling that came upon me. Only to think that on this, the second time I had come through these ruined rooms, and they were here again! It was plain enough Harry Lant and Lizzy made this their meeting-place, and only they knew how many times they'd met before.

Time back, I could have laughed at the idea of me, a great strapping fellow, feeling as I did; but now I felt very wretched; and as I thought of Harry Lant kissing those bright red lips, and looking into those deep dark eyes, and being let pass his hand over the glossy hair, with the prospect of some day calling it all his own, I did not burn all over with a mad rage and passion, but it was like a great grief coming upon me, so that, if it hadn't been for being a man, I could have sat down and cried.

I should think ten minutes passed, and the whispering still went on, when I said to myself: 'Be a man, Isaac; if she likes him better, hasn't she a right to her pick?' But still I felt very miserable as I turned to go away, when a something, said a little louder than the rest, stopped me.

'That ain't English,' I says to myself. 'What! surely she's not listening to that black scoundrel?'

I was red-hot then in a moment; and as to thinking whether this or that was straightforward, or whether I was playing the spy, or anything of that sort, such an idea never came into my head. Chunder was evidently talking to

Lizzy Green in that room; and for a few seconds I felt blind with a sort of jealous savage rage—against her, mind, now; and going on tip-toe, I looked round the doorway, so as to see as well as hear.

I was back in an instant, with a fresh set of sensations busy in my breast. It was Chunder, but he was alone; there was no Lizzy there; and I don't know whether my heart beat then for joy at knowing it, or for shame at myself for having thought such a thing of her.

What did it mean, then?

I did not have to ask myself the question twice, for the answer came—Treachery! And stealing to the slit of window in the room I was in, I peeped cautiously out in time to see Chunder throwing out what looked like a white packet. I could see his arm move as he threw it down to a man in a turban—a dark wiry-looking rascal; and in those few seconds I seemed to read that packet word for word, though no doubt the writing was in one of the native dialects, and my reading of it was, that it was a correct list of the defenders of the place, the women and children, and what arms and ammunition there were stored up.

It was all plain enough, and the villain was sending it by a man who must have brought him tidings of some kind.

What was I to do? That man ought to be stopped at all hazards; and what I ought to have done was to steal back, give the alarm, and let a party go round to try and cut him off.

That's what I ought to have done; but I never did have much judgment.

Now for what I did do.

Slipping back from the window, I went cautiously to the doorway, and entered the old room where Chunder was standing at the window; and I went in so quietly, and he was so intent, that I had crept close, and was in the act of

leaping on to him before he turned round and tried to avoid me.

He was too late, though, for with a bound I was on him, pinioning his hands, and holding him down on the window-sill, with his head half out, as bearing down upon him, I leaned out as far as I could, yelling out: 'Sentry in the next roof, mark man below. Stop him, or fire.'

The black fellow below drew a long, awkward-looking pistol, and aimed at me, but only for a moment. Perhaps he was afraid of killing Chunder, for the next instant he had stuck the pistol back in his calico belt, and, with head stooped, was running as hard as he could run, when I could hardly contain myself for rage, knowing as I did how important it was for him to have been stopped.

'Bang!'

A sharp report from the roof, and the fellow made a bound.

Was he hit?

No: he only seemed to run the faster.

'Bang!'

Another report as the runner came in sight of the second sentry.

But I saw no more, for all my time was taken up with Chunder; for as the second shot rang out, he gave a heave, and nearly sent me through the open window.

It was by a miracle almost that I saved myself from breaking my neck, for it was a good height from the ground; but I held on to him tightly with a clutch such as he never had on his arms and neck before; and then, with a strength for which I shouldn't have given him credit, he tussled with me, now tugging to get away, now to throw me from the window, his hot breath beating all the time upon my cheeks, and his teeth grinning, and eyes rolling savagely.

It was only a spurt, though, and I soon got the better of him.

I don't want to boast, but I suppose our cold northern bone and muscle are tougher and stronger than theirs; and at the end of five minutes, puffing and blown, I was sitting on his chest, taking a paper from inside his calico.

That laid me open; for, like a flash, I saw then that he had a knife in one hand, while before another thought could pass through my mind, it was sticking through my jacket and the skin of my ribs, and my fist was driven down against his mouth for him to kiss for the second time in his life.

Next minute, Captain Dyer and a dozen men were in the room, Chunder was handcuffed and marched off, and the captain was eagerly questioning me.

'But is that fellow shot down or taken—the one outside?' I asked.

'Neither,' said Captain Dyer; 'and it is too late now: he has got far enough away.'

Then I told him what I had seen, and he looked at the packet, his brow knitting as he tried to make it out.

'I ought to have come round, and given the alarm, captain,' I said bitterly.

'Yes, my good fellow, you ought,' he said; 'and I ought to have had that black scoundrel under lock and key days ago. But it is too late now to talk of what ought to have been done; we must talk of what there is to do.—But are you hurt?'

'He sent his knife through my jacket, sir,' I said, 'but it's only a scratch on the skin;' and fortunately that's what it proved to be, for we had no room for wounded men, since we should have them soon enough.

CHAPTER XI.

An hour of council, and then another—our two leaders not seeming to agree as to the extent of the coming danger. Challenge from the west roof: 'Orderly in sight.'

Sure enough, a man on horseback riding very slowly, and as if his horse was dead beat.

'Surely it isn't that poor fellow come back, because his horse has failed? He ought to have walked on,' said Captain Dyer.

'Same man,' said Lieutenant Leigh, looking through his glass; and before very long, the poor fellow who had gone away at daybreak rode slowly up to the gate, was admitted, and then had to be helped from his horse, giving a great sobbing groan as it was done.

'In here, quick!' I said, for I thought I heard the ladies' voices; and we carried him in to where Mrs Bantem was, as usual, getting ready for dinner, and there we laid him on a mattress.

'Despatches, captain,' he says, holding up the captain's letter to Colonel Maine. 'They didn't get that. They were too many for me. I dropped one, though, with my pistol, and cut my way through the others.'

As he spoke, I untwisted his leather sword-knot, which was cutting into his wrist, for his hacked and blood-stained sabre was hanging from his hand.

'Wouldn't go back into the scabbard,' he said faintly; and then with a harsh gasp: 'Water—water!'

He revived then a bit; and as Captain Dyer and Mrs Bantem between them were attending to, and binding up his wounds, he told us how he had been set upon ten miles off, and been obliged to fight his way back; and, poor chap, he had fought; for there were no less than ten lance-wounds in

his arms, thighs, and chest, from a slight prick up to a horrible gash, deep and long enough, it seemed to me, to let out half-a-dozen poor fellows' souls.

Just in the middle of it, I saw Captain Dyer start and look strange, for there was a shadow came across where we were kneeling; and the next instant he was standing between Miss Ross and the wounded man.

'Pray, go, dear Elsie; this is no place for you,' I heard him whisper to her.

'Indeed, Lawrence,' she whispered, 'am I not a soldier's daughter? I ought to say this is no place for you. Go, and make your arrangements for our defence.'

I don't think any one but me saw the look of love she gave him as she took sponge and lint from his hand, pressing it as she did so, and then her pale face lit up with a smile as she met his eyes; the next moment she was kneeling by the wounded trooper, and in a quiet firm way helping Mrs Bantem, in a manner that made her, poor woman, stare with astonishment.

'God bless you, my darling,' she whispered to her, as soon as they had done, and the poor fellow was lying still—a toss-up with him whether it should be death or life; and I saw Mrs Bantem take Miss Ross's soft white hand between her two great rough hard palms, and kiss it just once.

'And I'd always been abusing and running her down for a fine madam, good for nothing but to squeak songs, and be looked at,' Mrs Bantem said to me, a little while after. 'Why, Isaac Smith, we shall be having that little maid shewing next that there's something in her.'

'And why not?' I said gruffly.

'Ah, to be sure,' says she, with a comical look out of one eye; 'why not? But, Isaac, my lad,' she said sadly, and looking at me very earnestly, 'I'm afraid there's sore times coming; and if so, God in heaven help those poor bairns!

Oh, if I 'd been a man, and been there!' she cried, as she recollected what the trooper had told us; and she shook her fist fiercely in the air. 'It's what I always did say: soldiers' wives have no business to have children; and it's rank cruelty to the poor little things to bring them into the world.'

Mrs Bantem then went off to see to her patient, while I walked into the court, wondering what would come next, and whether, in spite of all the little bitternesses and grumbling, everybody, now some of the stern realities of life were coming upon us, would shew up the bright side of his or her nature; and somehow I got very hopeful that they would.

I felt just then that I should have much liked to have a few words with Lizzy Green, but I had no chance, for it was a busy time with us. Captain Dyer felt strongly enough his responsibility, and not a minute did he lose in doing all he could for our defence; so that after an anxious day, with nothing more occurring, when I looked round at what had been done in barricading and so on, it seemed to me, speaking as a soldier, that, as far as I could judge, there was nothing more to be done, though still the feeling would come home to me that it was a great place for forty men to defend, if attacked by any number. Captain Dyer must have seen that, for he had arranged to have a sort of citadel at the north end by the gateway, and this was to be the last refuge, where all the ammunition and food and no end of chatties of water were stowed down in the great vault-place, which went under this part of the building and a good deal of the court. Then the watch was set, trebled this time, on roof and at window, and we waited impatiently for the morning. Yes, we all of us, I believe, waited impatiently for the morning, when I think, if we had known all that was to come, we should have knelt down and prayed for the darkness to keep on hour after hour, for days, and weeks, and months, sooner

than the morning should have broke as it did upon a rabble of black faces, some over white clothes, some over the British uniform that they had disgraced; and as I, who was on the west roof, heard the first hum of their coming, and caught the first glimpse of the ragged column, I gave the alarm, setting my teeth hard as I did so; for, after many years of soldiering, I was now for the first time to see a little war in earnest.

Captain Dyer's first act on the alarm being given was to double the guard over the three blacks, now secured in the strongest room he could find, the black nurse being well looked after by the women. Then, quick almost as thought, every man was at the post already assigned to him; the women and children were brought into the corner rooms by the gates, and then we waited excitedly for what should follow. The captain now ordered me out of the little party under a sergeant, and made me his orderly, and so it happened that always being with or about him, I knew how matters were going on, and was always carrying the orders, now to Lieutenant Leigh, now to this sergeant or that corporal; but at the first offset of the defence of the old place, there was a dispute between captain and lieutenant; and I 'm afraid it was maintained by the last out of obstinacy, and just at a time when there should have been nothing but pulling together for the sake of all concerned. I must say, though, that there was right on both sides.

Lieutenant Leigh put it forward as his opinion that, short of men as we were, it was folly to keep four enemies under the same roof, who were likely at any time to overpower the one or two sentries placed over them; while, if there was nothing to fear in that way, there was still the necessity of shortening our defensive forces by a couple of valuable men.

'What would you do with them, then?' said Captain Dyer.

'Set them at liberty,' said Lieutenant Leigh.

'I grant all you say, in the first place,' said the captain; 'but our retaining them is a sheer necessity.'

'Why?' said Lieutenant Leigh, with a sneer; and I must say that at first I held with him.

'Because,' said the captain sternly, 'if we set them at liberty, we increase our enemies' power, not merely with three men, but with scoundrels who can give them the fullest information of our defences, over and above that of which I am afraid they are already possessed. The matter will not bear further discussion.—Lieutenant Leigh, go now to your post, and do your duty to the best of your power.'

Lieutenant Leigh did not like this, and he frowned; but Captain Dyer was his superior officer, and it was his duty to obey, so of course he did.

Now, our position was such, that, say, a hundred men with a field-piece could have knocked a wing in, and then carried us by assault with ease; but though our enemies were full two hundred and fifty, and many of them drilled soldiers, pieces you may say of a great machine, fortunately for us, there was no one to put that machine together, and set it in motion. We soon found that out, for, instead of making the best of things, and taking possession of buildings —sheds and huts—here and there, from which to annoy us, they came up in a mob to the gate, and one fellow on a horse —a native chief, he seemed to be—gave his sword a wave, and half-a-dozen sowars round him did the same, and then they called to us to surrender.

Captain Dyer's orders were to act entirely on the defensive, and to fire no shot till we had orders, leaving them to commence hostilities.

'For,' said he, speaking to all the men, 'it may be a cowardly policy with such a mutinous set in front of us, but we have the women and children to think of; therefore, our duty is to hold the foe at bay, and when we do fire, to make

every shot tell. Beating them off is, I fear, impossible, but we may keep them out till help comes.'

'Wouldn't it be advisable, sir, to try and send off another despatch?' I said; 'there's the trooper's horse.'

'Where?' said Captain Dyer, with a smile. 'That has already been thought of, Smith; and Sergeant Jones, the only good horseman we have, went off at two o'clock, and by this time is, I hope, out of danger.—Good heavens! what does that mean?' he said, using his glass.

It was curious that I should have thought of such a thing just then, at a time when four sowars led up Sergeant Jones tied by a piece of rope to one of their saddle-bows, while the trooper's horse was behind.

Captain Dyer would not shew, though, that he was put out by the failure of that hope: he only passed the word for the men to stand firm, and then sent me with a message to Mrs Colonel Maine, requesting that every one might keep right away from the windows, as the enemy might open fire at any time.

He was quite right, for just as I knocked at Mrs Maine's door, a regular squandering, scattering fire began, and you could hear the bullets striking the wall with a sharp pat, bringing down showers of white lime-dust and powdered stone.

I found Mrs Maine seated on the floor with her children, pale and trembling, the little things the while laughing and playing over some pictures. Miss Ross was leaning over her sister, and Lizzy Green was waiting to give the children something else when they were tired of the pictures.

As the rattle of the musketry began, it was soon plain enough to see who had the stoutest hearts; but I seemed to be noticing nothing, though I did a great deal, and listened to Mrs Bantem's voice in the next room, bullying and scolding a woman for crying out loud and upsetting everybody else.

I gave my message, and then Miss Ross asked me if any one was hurt, to which I answered as cheerfully as could be that we were all right as yet; and then, taking myself off, Lizzy Green came with me to the door, and I held out my hand to say 'Good-bye,' for I knew it was possible I might never see her again. She gave me her hand, and said 'Good-bye,' in a faltering sort of way, and it seemed to me that she shrank from me. The next instant, though, there was the rattling crash of the firing, and I knew now that our men were answering.

CHAPTER XII.

As I went down into the court-yard, I found the smoke rising in puffs as our men fired over the breastwork at the mob coming at the gate. Captain Dyer in the thick of it the while, going from man to man, warning them to keep themselves out of sight, and to aim low.

'Take care of yourselves, my lads. I value every one of you at a hundred of those black scoundrels.—Tut, tut, who's that down?'

'Corporal Bray,' says some one.

'Here, Emson, Smith, both of you lend a hand here: we'll make Bantem's quarters hospital.—Now then, look alive, ambulance party.'

We were about lifting the poor fellow, who had sunk down behind the breastwork, all doubled up like, hands and knees; and head down; but as we touched him, he straightened himself out, and looked up at Captain Dyer.

'Don't touch me yet,' he says in a whisper. 'My stripes for some one, captain. Do for Isaac Smith there. Hooray!' he says faintly; and he took off his cap with one hand, gave it a bit of a wave—'God save the Quee'——

'Bear him carefully to the empty ground floor, south side,' says Captain Dyer sternly; 'and make haste back, my lads: moments are precious.'

'I'll do that, with Private Manning's wife,' says a voice; and turning as we were going to lift our dead comrade, there was big, strapping Mrs Bantem, and another soldier's wife, and she then said a few words to the captain.

'Gone?' says Captain Dyer.

'Quarter of an hour ago, sir,' says Mrs Bantem; and then to me: 'Poor trooper, Isaac!'

'Another man here,' says Captain Dyer.—'No, not you, Smith.—Fill up here, Bantem.'

Joe Bantem waved his hand to his wife, and took the dead corporal's place, but not easily, for Measles, who was next man, was stepping into it, when Captain Dyer ordered him back.

'But there 's such a much better chance of dropping one of them mounted chaps, sir,' says Measles grumbling.

'Hold your tongue, sir, and go back to your own loop-hole,' says Captain Dyer; and the way that Measles kept on loading and firing, ramming down his cartridges viciously, and then taking long and careful aim, ah! and with good effect too, was a sight to see.

All the while we were expecting an assault, but none came, for the mutineers fell fast, and did not seem to dare to make a rush while we kept up such practice.

Then I had to go round and ask Lieutenant Leigh to send six more men to the gate, and to bring news of what was going on round the other sides.

I found the lieutenant standing at the window where I caught Chunder, and there was a man each at all the other four little windows which looked down at the outside—all the others, as I have said, looking in upon the court.

The lieutenant's men had a shot now and then at any one who approached; but the mutineers seemed to have deter-

mined upon forcing the gate, and, so far as I could see, there was very little danger to fear from any other quarter.

I knew Lieutenant Leigh was not a coward, but he seemed very half-hearted over the defence, doing his duty but in a sullen sort of way; and of course that was because he wanted to take the lead now held by Captain Dyer; and perhaps it was misjudging him, but I'm afraid just at that time he'd have been very glad if a shot had dropped his rival, and he could have stepped into his place.

Captain Dyer's plan to keep the rabble at bay till help could come, was of course quite right; and that night it was an understood thing, that another attempt should be made to send a messenger to Wallahbad, another of our corporals being selected for the dangerous mission.

The fighting was kept on, in an on-and-off way, till evening, we losing several men, but a good many falling on the other side, which made them more cautious, and not once did we have a chance of touching a man with the bayonet. Some of our men grumbled a little at this, saying that it was very hard to stand there hour after hour to be shot down; and could they have done as they liked, they'd have made a sally.

Then came the night, and a short consultation between the captain and Lieutenant Leigh. The mutineers had ceased firing at sundown, and we were in hopes that there would be a rest till daylight, but all the same the strictest watch was kept, and only half the men lay down at a time.

Half the night, though, had not passed, when a hand was laid upon my shoulder, and in an instant I was up, piece in hand, to find that it was Captain Dyer.

'Come here,' he said quietly; and following him into the room underneath where the women were placed, he told me to listen, and I did, to hear a low, grating, tearing noise, as

of something scraping on stone. 'That's been going on,' he said, 'for a good hour, and I can't make it out, Smith.'

'Prisoners escaping,' I said quietly.

'But they are not so near as that. They were confined in the next room but one,' he said in a whisper.

'Broke through, then,' I said.

Then we went—Captain Dyer and I—quietly up on to the roof, answered the challenge, and then walked to the edge, where, leaning over, we could hear the dull grating noise once more; then a stone seemed to fall out on to the sandy way by the palace walls.

It was all plain enough: they had broken through from one room to another, where there was a window no bigger than a loophole, and they were widening this.

'Quick, here, sentry,' says the captain.

The next minute the sentry hurried up, and we had a man posted as nearly over the window as we could guess, and then I had my orders in a minute: 'Take two men and the sentry at their door, rush in, and secure them at once. But if they have got out, join Sergeant Williams, and follow me to act as reserve, for I am going to make a sally by the gate to stop them from the outside.'

I roused Harry Lant and Measles, and they were with me in an instant. We passed a couple of sentries, and gave the countersign, and then mounted to the long stone passage which led to where the prisoners had been placed.

As we three privates neared the door, the sentry there challenged; but when we came up to him and listened, there was not a sound to be heard, neither had he heard anything, he said. The next minute the door was thrown open, and we found an empty room; but a hole in the wall shewed us which way the prisoners had gone.

We none of us much liked the idea of going through that hole to be taken at a disadvantage, but duty was duty, and running forward, I made a bold thrust through with my

piece in two or three directions; then I crept through, followed by Harry Lant, and found that room empty too; but they had not gone by the doorway which led into the women's part, but enlarged the window, and dropped down, leaving a large opening—one that, if we had not detected it then, would no doubt have done nicely for the entrance of a strong party of enemies.

'Sentry here,' I said; and leaving the man at the window, followed by Harry Lant and Measles, I ran back, got down to the court-yard, crossed to where Sergeant Williams with half-a-dozen men waited our coming, and then we were passed through the gate, and went along at the double to where we could hear noise and shouting.

We had the narrow alley to go through—the one I have before mentioned as being between the place we had strengthened and the next building; and no sooner were we at the end, than we found we were none too soon, for there, in the dim starlight, we could see Captain Dyer and four men surrounded by a good score, howling and cutting at them like so many demons, and plainly to be seen by their white calico things.

'By your left, my lads, shoulder to shoulder—double,' says the sergeant.

Then we gave a cheer, and with hearts bounding with excitement, down we rushed upon the scoundrels to give them their first taste of the bayonet, cutting Captain Dyer and two more men out, just as the other two went down.

It was as fierce a fight that as it was short; for we soon found the alarm spread, and enemies running up on all sides. It was bayonet-drill then, and well we shewed the practice, till we retired slowly to the entrance of the alley; but the pattering of feet and cries told that there were more coming to meet us that way; when, following Captain Dyer's orders we retreated in good form in the other direction, so as to get round to the gate by the other alley, on the south side.

And now for the first time we gave them a volley, checking the advance for a few seconds, while we retreated loading, to turn again, and give them another volley, which checked them again; but only for a few seconds, when they came down upon us like a swarm of bees, right upon our bayonets; and as fast as half-a-dozen fell, half-a-dozen more were leaping upon the steel.

We kept our line, though, one and all, retiring in good order to the mouth of the second court, which ran down by the south side of the palace; when, as if maddened at the idea of losing us, a whole host of them came at us with a rush, breaking our line, and driving us anyhow, mixed up together, down the alley, which was dark as pitch; but not so dark but that we could make out a turban or a calico cloth, and those bayonets of ours were used to some purpose.

Half-a-dozen times over I heard the captain's voice cheering us on, and shouting: 'Gate, gate!' Then I saw the flash of his sword once, and managed to pin a fellow who was making at him, just as we got out at the other end with a fierce rush. Then I heard the captain shout 'Rally!' and saw him wave his sword; and then I don't recollect any more, for it was one wild fierce scuffle—stab and thrust, in the midst of a surging, howling, maddened mob, forcing us towards the gateway.

I thought it was all over with us, when there came a cheer, and the gate was thrown open, a dozen men formed, and charged down, driving the niggers back like sheep; and then, somehow or another, we were cut out, and, under cover of the new-comers, reached the gate.

A ringing volley was then given into the thick of the mutineers as they came pouring on again; but the next moment all were safely inside, and the gate was thrust to and barred; and, panting and bleeding, we stood, six of us, trying to get our breath.

'This wouldn't have happened,' says a voice, 'if my advice had been taken. I wish the black scoundrels had been shot. Where's Captain Dyer?'

There was no answer, and a dead chill fell on me as I seemed to realise that things had come now to a bad pass.

'Where's Sergeant Williams?' said Lieutenant Leigh again; but it seemed to me that he spoke in a husky voice.

'Here!' said some one faintly, and, turning, there was the sergeant seated on the ground, and supporting himself against the breastwork.

'Any one know the other men who went out on this mad sally?' says the lieutenant.

'Where's Harry Lant?' I says.

There was no answer here either, and this time it was my turn to speak in a queer husky voice as I said again: 'Where's Measles? I mean Sam Bigley.'

'He's gone too, poor chap,' says some one.

'No, he ain't gone neither,' says a voice behind me, and, turning, there was Measles tying a handkerchief round his head, muttering the while about some black devil. 'I ain't gone, nor I ain't much hurt,' he growled; 'and if I don't take it out of some on 'em for this chop o' the head, it's a rum un; and that's all I've got to say.'

'Load!' says Lieutenant Leigh shortly; and we loaded again, and then fired two or three volleys at the niggers as they came up towards the gate once more; when some one calls out: 'Ain't none of us going to make a sally party, and bring in the captain?'

'Silence there, in the ranks!' shouts Lieutenant Leigh; and though it had a bad sound coming from him as it did, and situated as he was, no one knew better than I did how that it would have been utter madness to have gone out again; for even if he were alive, instead of bringing in

Captain Dyer, now that the whole mob was roused, we should have all been cut to pieces.

It was as if in answer to the lieutenant's order that silence seemed to fall then, both inside and outside the palace—a silence that was only broken now and then by the half-smothered groan of some poor fellow who had been hurt in the sortie—though the way in which those men of ours did bear wounds, some of them even that were positively awful, was a something worth a line in history.

Yes, there was a silence fell upon the place for the rest of that night, and I remember thinking of the wounds that had been made in two poor hearts by that bad night's work; and I can say now, faithful and true, that there was not a selfish thought in my heart as I remembered Lizzy Green, any more than there was when Miss Ross came uppermost in my mind, for I knew well enough that they must have soon known of the disaster that had befallen our little party.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHATEVER those poor women suffered, they took care it should not be seen by us men, and indeed we had little time to think of them the next day. We had given ourselves the task to protect them, and we were fighting hard to do it, and that was all we could do then; for the enemy gave us but little peace; not making any savage attack, but harassing us in a cruel way, every man acting like for himself, and all the discipline the sepoys had learned seeming to be forgotten.

As for Lieutenant Leigh, he looked cold and stern, but there was no flinching with him now: he was in command, and he shewed it; and though I never liked the man, I

must say that he shewed himself now a brave and clever officer; and but for his skilful arrangement of the few men under his charge, that place would have fallen half-a-dozen times over.

We had taken no prisoners, so that there was no chance of talking of exchange; though I believe to a man all thought that the captain and files missing from our company were dead.

The women now lent us their help, bringing down spare muskets and cartridges, loading too for us; so that when the mutineers made an attack, we were able to keep up a much sharper fire than we should have done under other circumstances.

It was about the middle of the afternoon, when, hot and exhausted, we were firing away, for the bullets were coming thick and fast through the gateway, flying across the yard, and making a passage in that direction nearly certain death, when I felt a strange choking feeling, for Measles says to me all at once: 'Look there, Ike.'

I looked and I could hardly believe it, and rubbed my eyes, for just in the thickest of the firing there was the sound of merry laughter, and those two children of the colonel's came toddling out, right across the line of fire, turned back to look up at some one calling to them from the window, and then stood still, laughing and clapping their hands.

I don't know how it was, I only know that it wasn't to look brave, but, dropping my piece, I rushed to catch them, just at the same moment as did Miss Ross and Lizzy Green; while, directly after, Lieutenant Leigh rushed from where he was, caught Miss Ross round the waist, and dragged her away, as I did Lizzy and the children.

How it was that we were none of us hit, seems strange to me, for all the time the bullets were pattering on the wall beyond us. I only know I turned sick and faint as I just

said to Lizzy: 'Thank God for that!' and she led off the children; Miss Ross shrinking from Lieutenant Leigh with a strange mistrustful look, as if she were afraid of him; and the next minute they were under cover, and we were back at our posts.

'Poor bairns!' says Measles to me, 'I ain't often glad of anything, Ike Smith, but I am glad they ain't hurt. Now my soul seemed to run and help them myself, but my legs seemed as if they couldn't move. You need not believe it without you like,' he added in his sour way.

'But I do believe it, old fellow,' I said warmly, as I held out my hand. 'Chaff's chaff, but you never knew me make light of a good act done by a true-hearted comrade.'

'All right,' says Measles gruffly. 'Now, see me pot that sowar.—Missed him, I declare!' he exclaimed, as soon as he had fired. 'These pieces ain't true. No! hit him! He's down! That's one bairn-killer the less.'

'Sam,' I said just then, 'what's that coming up between the huts yonder?'

'Looks like a wagin,' says Measles. ''Tis a wagin, ain't it?'

'No,' I said, feeling that miserable I didn't know what to do; 'it isn't a wagon, Sam; but—— Why, there's another. A couple of field-pieces!'

'Nine-pounders, by all that's unlucky,' said Measles, slapping his thigh. 'Then I tell you what it is, Ike Smith —it's about time we said our prayers.'

I didn't answer, for the words would not come; but it was what had always been my dread, and it seemed now that the end was very near.

Troubles were coming upon us thick; for being relieved a short time after, to go and have some tea that Mrs Bantem had got ready, I saw something that made me stop short, and think of where we should be if the water-supply was run out, for though we had the chatties down below in the

vault under the north end, we wanted what there was in the tank, while there was *Nabob*, the great elephant, drawing it up in his trunk, and cooling himself by squirting it all over his back!

I went to Lieutenant Leigh, and pointed it out to him; and the great beast was led away; when, there being nothing else for it, we opened a way through our breast-work, watched an opportunity, threw open the gate, and he marched out right straight in amongst the mutineers, who cheered loudly, after their fashion, as he came up to them.

There was no more firing that night, and taking it in turns, we, some of us, had a sleep, I among the rest, all dressed as I was, and with my gun in my hand, ready for use at a moment's notice; and I remember thinking what a deal depended on the sentries, and how thoroughly our lives were in their hands; and then my next thought was how was it possible for it to be morning, for I had only seemed to close my eyes, and then open them again on the light of day.

But morning it was; and with a dull, dead feeling of misery upon me, I got up and gave myself a shake, ran the ramrod down my piece, to see that it was charged all right, looked to the cap, and then once more prepared for the continuation of the struggle, low-spirited and disheartened, but thankful for the bit of refreshing rest I had had.

A couple of hours passed, and there was no movement on the part of the enemy; the ladies never stirred, but we could hear the children laughing and playing about, and how one did seem to envy the little light-hearted, thoughtless things! But my thoughts were soon turned into another direction, for Lieutenant Leigh ordered me up into one of the rooms commanding the gateway, and looking out on the square where the guns were standing, and came up with me himself.

'You'll have a good look-out from here, Smith,' he said; 'and being a good shot'——

He didn't say any more, for he was, like me, taken up with the movement in the square—a lot of the mutineers running the two guns forward in front of the gate, and then closing round them, so that we could not see what was going on; but we knew well enough that they were charging them, and there seemed nothing for it but to let them fire, unless by a bold sally we could get out and spike them.

Just then, Lieutenant Leigh looked at me, and I at him, when, touching my cap in salute, I said: 'Two good nails, sir, and a tap on each would do it.'

'Yes, Smith,' he said grimly; 'but who is to drive those two nails home?'

I didn't answer him for a minute, I should think, for I was thinking over matters, about life, and about Lizzy, and now that Harry Lant was gone, it seemed to me that there might be a chance for me; but still duty was duty, and if men could not in such a desperate time as this risk something, what was the good of soldiers?

'I'll drive 'em home, sir,' I says then quietly, 'or they shall drive me home!'

He looked at me for an instant, and then nodded.

'I'll get the men ready,' he says; 'it's our only chance; and with a bold dash we may do it. I'll see to the armourer's chest for hammers and spikes. I'll spike one, Smith, and you the other; but, mind, if I fail, help me, as I will you, if you fail; and God help us! Keep a sharp look-out till I come back.'

He left the room, and I heard a little movement below, as of the men getting ready for the sally; and all the while I stood watching the crowd in front, which now began hurraing and cheering; and there was a motion which shewed that the guns were being run in nearer, till they stopped about fifty yards from the gate.

'What makes him so long?' I thought, trembling with

excitement; 'another minute, perhaps, and the gate will be battered down, and that mob rushing in.'

Then I thought that we ought all who escaped from the sortie, in case of failure, to be ready to take to the rooms adjoining where I was, which would be our last hope; and then I almost dropped my piece, my mouth grew dry, and I seemed choked, for, with a loud howl, the crowd opened out, and I saw a sight that made my blood run cold—those two nine-pounders standing with a man by each breech, smoking linstock in hand; while bound, with their heads against the muzzles, and their white faces towards us, were Captain Dyer and Harry Lant!

One spark—one touch of the linstock on the breech—and those two brave fellows' heads would be blown to atoms; and, as I expected that every moment such would be the case, my knees knocked together; but the next moment I was down on those shaking knees, my piece made ready, and a good aim taken, so that I could have dropped one of the gunners before he was able to fire.

I hesitated for a moment before I made up my mind which to try and save, and the thought of Lizzy Green came in my mind, and I said to myself: 'I love her too well to give her pain,' when, giving up Captain Dyer, I aimed at the gunner by poor Harry Lant.

'Don't fire,' said a voice just then, and, turning, there was Lieutenant Leigh. 'The black-hearted wretches!' he muttered. 'But we are all ready; though now, if we start, it will be the signal for the death of those two.—But what does this mean?'

What made him say that, was a chief, all in shawls, who rode forward and shouted out in good English, that they gave us one hour to surrender; but, at the end of that time, if we had not marched out without arms, they would blow their prisoners away from the mouth of the guns.

Then, for fear we had not heard it, he spurred his horse

up to within ten yards of the gate, and shouted it out again, so that every one could hear it through the place; and, though I could have sent a bullet through and through him, I could not help admiring the bold daring fellow, riding up right to the muzzles of our pieces.

But all the admiration I felt was gone the next moment, as I thought of the cruelties practised, and of those bound there to those gun-muzzles.

There was nothing said for a few minutes, for I expected the lieutenant to speak; but as he did not, I turned to him and said: 'If all was ready, sir, I could drop one gunner; and I'd trust Measles—Sam Bigley—to drop the other, when a bold dash might do it. You see they've retired a good thirty yards, and we should only have twenty more to run than they; while the surprise would give us that start. A good sharp jack-knife would set the prisoners free, and a covering-party would perhaps check the pursuit while we got in.'

'We shall have to try it, Smith,' he said, his breath coming thick and fast with excitement; and then he seemed to turn white, for Miss Ross and Lizzy came into the room.

CHAPTER XIV.

I SHOULD think it must have been the devil tempting Lieutenant Leigh, or he would never have done as he did; for, as he looked at Miss Ross, the change that came over him was quite startling. He could read all that was passing in her heart; there was no need for her to lay her hand upon his arm, and point with the other out of the window, as in a voice that I didn't know for hers, she said: 'Will you leave those two brave men there to die, Lieutenant Leigh?'

He didn't answer for a moment, but seemed to be

struggling with himself; then, speaking as huskily as she did, he said: 'Send away that girl!' and before I could go to her—for I should have done it then, I know—and whisper a few words of hope, poor Lizzy went out, mourning for Harry Lant, wringing her hands; and I stood at my post, a sentry by my commander's orders, so that it was no spying on my part if I heard what followed.

I believe Lieutenant Leigh fancied he was speaking in an undertone, when he led Miss Ross away to a corner, and spoke to her; but this was perhaps the most exciting moment in his life, and his voice rose in spite of himself, so that I heard all; while she, poor thing, I believe forgot all about my presence; and, as a sentry—a machine almost—placed there, what right had I to speak?

'Will you leave him?' said Miss Ross again. 'Will you not try to save him?'

Lieutenant Leigh did not answer for a bit, for he was making his plans, and I felt quite staggered as I saw through them.

'You see how he is placed: what can I do?' said Lieutenant Leigh. 'If I go, it is the signal for firing. You see the gunners waiting. And why should I risk the lives of my men, and my own, to save him?—He is a soldier, and it is the fortune of war: he must die.'

'Are you a man, or a coward?' said Miss Ross angrily.

'No coward,' he said fiercely; 'but a poor slighted man, whom you have wronged, jilted, and ill-used; and now you come to me to save your lover's life—to give mine for it. You have robbed me of all that is pleasant between you; and now you ask more. Is it just?'

'Lieutenant Leigh, you are speaking madly. How can you be so unjust?' she cried, holding tightly by his arm, for he was turning away, while I felt mad with him for torturing the poor girl, when it was decided that the attempt was to be made.

'I am not unjust,' he said. 'The hazard is too great; and what should I gain if I succeeded? Pshaw! Why, if he were saved, it would be at the expense of my own life.'

'I would die to save him!' she said hoarsely.

'I know it, Elsie; but you would not give a loving word to save me. You would send me out to my death without compunction—without a care; and yet you know how I have loved you.'

'You—you loved me; and yet stand and see my heart torn—see me suffer like this!' cried Miss Ross, and there was something half wild in her looks as she spoke.

'Love you!' he cried; 'yes, you know how I have loved you'——

His voice sank here; but he was talking in her ear excitedly, saying words that made her shrink from him up to the wall, and look at him as if he were some object of the greatest disgust.

'You can choose,' he said bitterly, as he saw her action; and he turned away from her.

The next moment she was on her knees before him, holding up her hands as if in prayer.

'Promise me,' he said, 'and I will do it.'

'Oh, some other way—some other way!' she cried piteously, her face all drawn the while.

'As you will,' he said coldly.

'But think—oh, think! You cannot expect it of me. Have mercy! Oh, what am I saying?'

'Saying!' he cried, catching her hands in his, and speaking excitedly and fast—'saying things that are sending him to his death! What do I offer you? Love, devotion, all that man can give. He would, if asked now, give up all for his life; and yet you, who profess to love him so dearly, refuse to make that sacrifice for his sake! You cannot love him. If he could hear now, he would implore you to do it.

Think. I risk all. Most likely, my life will be given for his; perhaps we shall both fall. But you refuse. Enough: I must go; I cannot stay. There are many lives here under my charge; they must not be neglected for the sake of one. As I said before, it is the fortune of war; and, poor fellow, he has but a quarter of an hour or so to live, unless help comes.'

'Unless help comes,' groaned Miss Ross frantically, when, as Lieutenant Leigh reached the door, watching me over his shoulder the while, Miss Ross went down on her knees, stretched out her hands towards where Captain Dyer was bound to the gun, and then she rose, cold, and hard, and stern, and turned to Lieutenant Leigh, holding out her hand. 'I promise,' she said hoarsely.

'On your oath, before God?' he exclaimed joyfully, as he caught her in his arms.

'As God is my judge,' she faltered with her eyes upturned; and then, as he held her to his breast, kissing her passionately, she shivered and shuddered, and, as he released her, sank in a heap on the floor.

'Smith,' cried Lieutenant Leigh; 'right face—forward!' and as I passed Miss Ross, I heard her sob in a tone I shall never forget: 'O Lawrence, Lawrence!' and then a groan rose from her breast, and I heard no more.

CHAPTER XV.

'This is contrary to rule. As commandant, I ought to stay in the fort; but I've no one to give the leadership to, so I take it myself,' said Lieutenant Leigh; 'and now, my lads, make ready—present! That's well. Are all ready? At the word "Fire!" Privates Bigley and Smith fire at the two gunners. If they miss, I cry fire again, and Privates

Bantem and Grainger try their skill; then, at the double, down on the guns. Smith and I spike them, while Bantem and Grainger cut the cords. Mind this: those guns must be spiked, and those two prisoners brought in; and if the sortie is well managed, it is easy, for they will be taken by surprise. Hush! Confound it, men; no cheering.'

He only spoke in time, for in the excitement the men were about to hurray.

'Now, then, is that gate unbarred?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Is the covering-party ready?'

'Yes, sir.'

My hand trembled as he spoke; but the next instant it was of a piece with my gunstock. There was the hot square, with the sun shining on the two guns that must have been hot behind the poor prisoners' heads; there stood the two gunners in white, with their smoking linstocks, leaning against the wheels, for discipline was slack; and there, thirty or forty yards behind, were the mutineers, lounging about, and smoking many of them. For all firing had ceased, and judging that we should not risk having the prisoners blown away from the guns, the mutineers came boldly up within range, as if defying us, and it was pretty safe practice at some of them now.

I saw all this at a glance, and while it seemed as if the order would never come; but come it did, at last.

'FIRE!'

Bang! the two rifles going off like one; and the gunner behind Captain Dyer leaped into the air, while the one I aimed at seemed to sink down suddenly beside the wheel he had leaned upon. Then the gate flew open, and with a rush and a cheer, we, ten of us, raced down for the guns.

Double-quick time? I tell you it was a hard race; and being without my gun now—only my bayonet stuck in my

trousers' waist-band—I was there first, and had driven my spike into the touch-hole before Lieutenant Leigh reached his; but the next moment his was done, the cords were cut, and the prisoners loose from the guns. But now we had to get back.

The first inkling I had of the difficulty of this was seeing Captain Dyer and Harry Lant stagger, and fall forward; but they were saved by the men, and we saw directly that they must be carried.

No sooner thought of than done.

'Hoist Harry on my back,' says Grainger; and he took him like a sack; Bantem acting the same part by Captain Dyer; and those two ran off, while we tried to cover them.

For don't you imagine that the mutineers were idle all this while; not a bit of it. They were completely taken by surprise, though, at first, and gave us time nearly to get to the guns before they could understand what we meant; but the next moment some shouted and ran at us, and some began firing; while by the time the prisoners were cast loose, they were down upon us in a hand-to-hand fight.

And in those fierce struggles there is such excitement, that I've now but a very misty recollection of what took place; but I do recollect seeing the prisoners well on the way back, hearing a cheer from our men, and then, hammer in one hand, bayonet in the other, fighting my way backward along with my comrades. Then all at once a glittering flash came in the air, and I felt a dull cut on the face, followed directly after by another strange, numbing blow, which made me drop my bayonet, as my arm fell uselessly to my side; and then with a lurch and a stagger, I fell, and was trampled upon twice, when as I rallied once, a black savage-looking sepoy raised his clubbed musket to knock out my brains, but a voice I well knew cried: 'Not this time, my fine fellow. That's number three, that is, and well

home;' and I saw Measles drive his bayonet with a crash through the fellow's breast-bone, so that he fell across my legs.—'Now, old chap, come along,' he shouts, and an arm was passed under me.

'Run, Measles, run!' I said as well as I could. 'It's all over with me.'

'No; 'taint,' he said; 'and don't be a fool. Let me do as I like, for once in a way.'

I don't know how he did it, nor how, feeling sick and faint as I did, I managed to get on my legs; but old Measles stuck to me like a true comrade, and brought me in. For one moment I was struggling to my feet; and the next, after what seemed a deal of firing going over my head, I was inside the breastwork, listening to our men cheering and firing away, as the mutineers came howling and raging up almost to the very gates.

'All in?' I heard Lieutenant Leigh ask.

'To a man, sir,' says some one; 'but Private Bantem is hurt.'

'Hold your tongue, will you!' says Joe Bantem. 'I ain't killed, nor yet half. How would you like your wife frightened if you had one?'

'How's Private Lant?'

'Cut to pieces, sir,' says some one softly.

'I'm thankful that you are not wounded, Captain Dyer,' then says Lieutenant Leigh.

'God bless you, Leigh!' says the captain faintly: 'it was a brave act. I've only a scratch or two when I can get over the numbness of my limbs.'

I heard all this in a dim sort of fashion, just as if it was a dream in the early morning; for I was leaning up against the wall, with my face laid open and bleeding, and my left arm smashed by a bullet, and nobody just then took any notice of me, because they were carrying in Captain Dyer and Harry Lant; while the next minute, the fire was going

on hard and fast; for the mutineers were furious, and I suppose they danced round the guns in a way that shewed how mad they were about the spiking.

As for me, I did not seem to be in a great deal of pain; but I got turning over in my mind how well we had done it that morning; and I felt proud of it all, and glad that Captain Dyer and Harry Lant were brought in; but all the same what I had heard lay like a load upon me; and knowing, as I did, that poor Miss Ross had, as it were, sold herself to save the captain's life, and that she had, in a way of speaking, been cheated into doing so, I felt that when the opportunity came, I must tell the captain all I knew. When I had got as far as that with my thoughts, the dull numbness began to leave me, and everything else was driven out of my mind by the thought of my wound; and I got asking myself whether it was going to be very bad, for I thought it was, so getting up a little, I began to crawl along in the shade towards the ruined south end of the palace, nobody seeming to notice me.

CHAPTER XVI.

I DARESAY you who read this don't know what the sensation is of having one arm-bone shivered, and the dead limb swinging helplessly about in your sleeve, whilst a great miserable sensation comes over you that you are of no more use—that you are only a broken pitcher, fit to hold water no more, but only to be broken up to mend the road with. There were all those women and children wanting my help, and the help of hundreds more such as me, and instead of being of use, I knew that I must be a miserable burden to everybody, and only in the way.

Now, whether man—as some of the great philosophers say—did gradually get developed from the beast of the field,

I'm not going to pretend to know; but what I do know is this—that, leave him in his natural state, and when he, for some reason or another, forgets all that has been taught him, he seems very much like an animal, and acts as such.

It was something after this fashion with me then, for feeling like a poor brute out of a herd that has been shot by the hunters, I did just the same as it would—crawled away to find a place where I might hide myself and lie down and die.

You'll laugh, I daresay, when I tell you my sensations just then, and I'm ready to laugh at them now myself; for, in the midst of my pain and suffering, it came to me that I felt precisely as I did when I was a young shaver of ten years old. One Sunday afternoon, when everybody but mother and me had gone to church, and she had fallen asleep, I got father's big clay-pipe, rammed it full of tobacco out of his great lead box, and then took it into the back kitchen, feeling as grand as a churchwarden, and set to and smoked it till I turned giddy and faint, and the place seemed swimming about me.

Now, that was just how I felt when I crawled about in that place, trying not to meet anybody, lest the women should see me all covered with blood; and at last I got, as I thought, into a room where I should be all alone.

I say I crawled; and that's what I did do, on one hand and my knees, the fingers of my broken arm trailing over the white marble floor, with each finger making a horrible red mark, when all at once I stopped, drew myself up stiffly, and leaned trembling and dizzy up against the wall, trying hard not to faint. For I found that I wasn't alone, and that in place of getting away—crawling into some hole to lie down and die, I was that low-spirited and weak—I had come to a place where one of the women was, for there, upon her knees, was Lizzy Green, sobbing and crying, and tossing her hands about in the agony of her poor heart.

I was misty, and faint, and confused, you know; but perhaps it was something like instinct made me crawl to Lizzy's favourite place, for it was not intended. She did not see me, for her back was my way; and I did not mean her to know I was there; for in spite of my giddiness, I seemed to feel that she had learned all the news about our failure, and that she was crying about poor Harry Lant.

'And he deserves to be cried for, poor chap,' I said to myself, for I forgot all about my own pains then; but all the same something very dark and bitter came over me, as I wished that she had been crying instead for poor me.

'But then he was always so bright, and merry, and clever,' I thought, 'and just the man who would make his way with a woman; while I—— Please God, let me die now!' I whispered to myself directly after, 'for I'm only a poor, broken, helpless object, in everybody's way.'

It seemed just then as if the hot weak tears that came running out of my eyes made me clearer, and better able to hear all that the sobbing girl said, as I leaned closer and closer to the wall; while, as to the sharp pain every word she said gave me, the dull dead aching of my broken arm was nothing.

'Why—why did they let him go?' the poor girl sobbed: 'as if there were not enough to be killed without him; and him so brave, and stout, and handsome, and true. My poor heart's broken. What shall I do?'

Then she sobbed again; and I remember thinking that unless help soon came, if poor Harry Lant died of his wounds, she would soon go to join him in that land where there was to be no more suffering and pain.

Then I listened, for she was speaking again.

'If I could only have died for him, or been with, or—— Oh, what have I done, that I should be made to suffer so?'

I remember wondering whether she was suffering more

then than I was; for, in spite of my jealous despairing feeling, there was something of sorrow mixed up with it for her.

For she had always seemed to like poor Harry's merry ways, when I never could get a smile from her; and she 'd go and sit with Mrs Bantem for long enough when Harry was there, while if by chance I went, it seemed like the signal for her to get up, and say her young lady wanted her, when most likely Harry would walk back with her; and I went and told it all to my pipe.

'If he'd only known how I'd loved him,' she sobbed again, 'he'd have said one kind word to me before he went, have kissed me, perhaps, once; but no, not a look nor a sign! Ah! Isaac, Isaac! I shall never see you more!'

What—what? What was it choking me? What was it that sent what blood I had left gushing up in a dizzy cloud over my eyes, so that I could only gasp out once the one word 'Lizzy!' as I started to my feet, and stood staring at her in a helpless, half-blind fashion; for it seemed as though I had been mistaken, and that it was possible after all that she had been crying for me, believing me to be dead; but the next moment I was shrinking away from her, hiding my wounded face with my hand for fear she should see it, for leaping up, hot and flush-cheeked, and with those eyes of hers flashing at me, she was at my side with a bound.

'You cowardly, cruel, bad fellow!' she half-shrieked; 'how dare you stand in that mean deceitful way, listening to my words? Oh, that I should be such a weak fool, with a stupid, blabbing, chattering tongue, to keep on kneeling and crying there, telling lies, every one of them, and—— Get away with you!'

I think it was a smile that was on my face then, as she gave me a fierce thrust on the wounded arm, when I

staggered towards her. I know the pain was as if a red-hot hand had grasped me; but I smiled all the same, and then, as I fell, I heard her cry out two words, in a wild, agonised way, that went right to my heart, making it leap before all was blank; for I knew that those words meant that, in spite of all my doubts, I was loved.

'O Isaac!' she cried, in a wild frightened way, and then, as I said, all was blank and dark for I don't know how long; but I seemed to wake up to what was to me then like heaven, for my head was resting on Lizzy's breast, and, half-mad with fear and grief, she was kissing my pale face again and again.

'Try—try to forgive me for being so cruel, so unfeeling,' she sobbed; and then for a moment, as she saw me smile, she was about to fly out again, fierce-like, at having betrayed herself, and let me know how she loved me. Even in those few minutes I could read it all: how her passionate little heart was fighting against discipline, and how angry she was with herself; but I saw it all pass away directly, as she looked down at my bleeding face, and eagerly asked me if I was very much hurt.

I tried to answer, but I could not; for the same deathly feeling of sickness came on again, and I saw nothing.

I suppose, though, it only lasted a few minutes, for I woke like again to hear a panting hard breathing, as of some one using great exertion, and then I felt that I was being moved; but, for the life of me, for a few moments I could not make it out, till I heard the faint buzz of voices, when I found that Lizzy, the little fierce girl, who seemed to be as nothing beside me, was actually, in her excitement, carrying me to where she could get help, struggling along panting, a few feet at a time, beneath my weight, and me too helpless and weak to say a word.

'Good heavens! look!' I heard some one say the next moment, and I think it was Miss Ross; but it was some

time before I came to myself again enough to find that I was lying with a rolled-up cloak under my head, and Lizzy bathing my lips from time to time, with what I afterwards learned was her share of the water.

But what struck me most now was the way in which she was altered: her sharp, angry way was gone, and she seemed to be changed into a soft gentle woman, without a single flirty way or thought, but always ready to flinch and shrink away until she saw how it troubled me, when she 'd creep back to kneel down by my side, and put her little hand in mine; when, to make the same comparison again that I made before, I tell you that there, in that besieged and ruined place, half-starved, choked with thirst, and surrounded by a set of demons thirsting for our blood—I tell you that it seemed to me like being in heaven.

CHAPTER XVII.

I DON'T know how time passed then; but the next thing I remember is listening to the firing for a while, and then, leaning on Lizzy, being helped to the women's quarters, where, in spite of all they could do, those children would keep escaping from their mother, to get to Harry Lant, who lay close to me, poor fellow, smiling and looking happy whenever they came near him; and I smiled too, and felt as happy when Lizzy, after tending me with Mrs Bantem as long as was necessary, got bathing Harry's forehead with water and moistening his lips.

'Poor fellow,' I thought, 'it will do him good;' and I lay watching Lizzy moving about afterwards, and then I think I must have gone to sleep, or have fallen into a dull numb state, from which I was wakened by a voice I knew; and opening my eyes, I saw that Miss Ross, pale and scared-

looking, was on her knees by the side of Harry Lant, and that Captain Dyer was there.

'Not one word of welcome,' he said, with a strange drawn look on his face, which deepened as Miss Ross rose and went close to him.

'Yes,' she said; 'thank God you have returned safe.—No, no; don't touch me,' she cried hoarsely. 'Here, take me away—lead me out of this!' she said, for at that moment Lieutenant Leigh came quietly in, and she put her hands in his. 'Take me out,' she said again hoarsely; and then like some one muttering in a dream: 'Take me away—take me away.'

I said that drawn strange look on Captain Dyer's face seemed to deepen as he stood watching whilst those two went out together; then he passed his hand over his eyes, as if to ask himself whether it was a dream; and then, with a groan, he leaned one hand against the wall, feeling his way out from the room, and something seemed to hinder me from calling out to him, and telling him what I knew. For I was reasoning with myself, what ought I to do? and then, sick and faint, I seemed to sleep again.

But this time I was waked up by a loud shrieking, and a rush of feet, and, confused as I was, I knew what it meant: the hole where the blacks escaped—Chunder and his party—had not been properly guarded, and the mutineers had climbed up and made an entrance.

The alarm spread fast enough, but not quick enough to save life; for, with a howl, half-a-dozen sepoys, with their scarlet and white coatees open, dashed in with fixed bayonets, and two women were borne to the ground in an instant, while a couple of wretches made a dash at those two children—Little Cock Robin and Jenny Wren, as we called them—standing there, wondering like, by Harry Lant's bed on the floor, whilst the golden light of the setting sun filled the room, and lit up their little angels' faces.

But with a howl, such as I never heard woman give, Mrs Bantem rushed between them and the children, caught a bayonet in each hand, and held them together, letting them pass under one arm, then with a spring forward she threw those great arms of hers round the black fellows' necks as they hung together, and held them in such a hug as they never suffered from before.

The next moment they were all rolling together on the floor; but that incident saved the lives of those poor children, for there came a cheer now, and Measles and a dozen more were led in by Lieutenant Leigh, and——

There, I am telling you too many horrors. They beat them back step by step, at the point of the bayonet; and a fierce struggle it was, a long fight kept up from room to room, for our men were fierce now as the mutineers, and it was a genuine death-struggle; and the broken window being guarded, not a man of about a dozen mutineers who gained entrance lived to go back and relate their want of success.

And can you wonder, when two of those who fought had found their wives bayoneted: Grainger was one of them; and when the fight was over, during which, raging like a demon, he had bayoneted four men, the poor fellow sat down by his dead wife, took her head first in his lap, then to his breast, and rocked himself to and fro, crying like a child, till there was a bugle-call in the court-yard, when he laid her gently in a corner, carrying her like as if she had been a child, kneeled down, and said 'Our Father' right through by her side, kissed her lips two or three times, and then covered her face with a bit of an old red handkerchief; and him all the while covered with blood and dust and black of powder. Then, poor fellow, he got up and took his gun, and went out on the tips of his toes, lest he should wake her who would wake no more in this world.

Perhaps it was weakness, I don't know, but my eyes

were very wet just then, and a soft little hand was laid on my breast, and Lizzy's head leant over me, and her tears, too, fell very fast on my hot and fevered face.

I felt that I should die, not then, perhaps, but before very long, for I knew that my arm was so shattered that it ought to be amputated just below the elbow, while for want of surgical assistance it would mortify; but somehow I felt very happy just then, and my state did not give me much pain, only that I wanted to have been up and doing; and at last Lizzy helping me, I got up, my arm being bandaged and in a sling, to find that I could walk about a little; and I made my way down into the court-yard, where I got near to Captain Dyer, who, better now, and able to limp about, was talking with Lieutenant Leigh, both officers now, and forgetful apparently of all but the present crisis.

'What wounded are there?' said Captain Dyer, as I walked slowly up.

'Nearly every man to some extent,' said Lieutenant Leigh; 'but this man and Lant are the worst.'

'The place ought to be evacuated,' said Captain Dyer; 'it is impossible to hold it another day.'

'We might hold out another day,' said Lieutenant Leigh, 'but not longer. Why not retreat under cover of the night?'

'It seems the only thing left,' said Captain Dyer. 'We might perhaps get to some hiding-place or other before our absence was discovered; but the gate and that back window will be watched of course: how are we to get away with two severely wounded men, the women, and children?'

'That must be planned,' said Lieutenant Leigh; and then the watch was set for the night, as far as could be done, and another time of darkness set in.

It was that which puzzled me, why a good bold attack was not made by night; why, the place must have been

carried again and again; but no, we were left each night entirely at rest, and the attacks by day were clumsy and bad. There was no support; every man fought for himself, and after his own fashion, and I suppose that every man did look upon himself as an officer, and resented all discipline. At all events, it was our salvation, though at this time it seemed to me that the end must be coming on the next day, and I remember thinking, that if it did come to the end, I should like to keep one cartridge left in my pouch.

Then my mind went off wandering in a misty way upon a plan to get away by night, and I tried to make one, taking into consideration, that the quarters on the north side of us now, and only separated by ten feet of alley, were in the hands of the mutineers, who camped in them, the same being the case in the quarters on the south side, separated again by the ten feet of alley through which we returned when Captain Dyer and Harry Lant were taken. While on the east was the market plain or square, and on the west a wilderness of open country with huts and sheds. I felt, do you know, that a good plan of escape at this time was just what I ought to make, every one else being busy with duty, and me not able to either fight or stand sentry, so I worked on hard at it that night, trying to be useful in some way; and after a fashion, I worked one out.

But I have not told you what I meant to do with that last cartridge in my pouch; I meant that to be pressed to my lips once before I contrived with one hand to load my rifle, and then if the worst came to the very worst, and when I had waited to the last to see if help would come, then, when it seemed that there was no hope, I meant to do what I told myself it would be my duty, as a man and a soldier, to do, if I loved Lizzy Green—do what more than one man did, during the mutiny, by the woman for whom he had been shedding his heart's best blood; and in the

dead of that night I did load that gun, after kissing the bullet; and a deal of pain that gave me, mental as well as bodily, but I don't think that I need to tell you what that last cartridge was for.

CHAPTER XVIII.

I THINK by this time you pretty well understand the situation of our palace, and how our stronghold was on the north side, close to which was the gate, so hardly fought for: if you don't, I'm afraid it is my fault, and not yours.

At all events, being at liberty, I went over it here and there, and from floor to roof, as I tried to make out which would be the best way for trying to escape; but somehow I couldn't see it then. To go out from the gate was impossible; and the same related to the broken-out window, as both places were thoroughly watched.

As for the other windows about the place, they were such slips, that without they were widened, any escaping by them was impossible. To have let ourselves down, one by one, from the flat roof by a rope, might have done, but it was a clumsy unsuitable way, with all those children and women, so I gave that up, and then sat down as I was by a little window looking out on to the north alley.

Wearied out at last, I suppose that a sort of stupor came over me, from which I did not wake till morning, to find myself suffering a dull numb pain; but when I opened my eyes I forgot that, because of her who was kneeling beside me, driving away the flies that were buzzing about, as if they knew that I was soon to be for them to rest on, without a hand to sweep them away.

At last, though, as I lay there wondering what could be

done to save us, the thought came all at once, and struggling to my feet, I held Lizzy to my heart a minute, and then went off to find Captain Dyer.

It quite took me aback to see his poor haggard face, and the way in which he took the trouble, for it was plain enough to see how he was cut to the heart by Miss Ross's treatment of him. But for all that, he was the officer and the gentleman; he had his duty to do, and he was doing it; so that, if even now, after losing so many men, and with so many more half disabled, if the enemy had made a bold assault now, they would have won the place dearly, though win it they must.

That did not seem their way, though they wanted the place for the sake of the great store of arms and ammunition it contained, but all the same they wanted to buy it cheap.

I found Captain Dyer ready enough to listen to my plan, though he shook his head, and said it was desperate. But after a little thought, he said: 'There are some hours now between this and night—help may come before then; if not, Smith, we must try it. My hands are full, so I leave the preparations with you: let every one carry food and a bottle of water—nothing more—all we want now is to save life.'

I promised I'd see to it; and I went and spoke cheerfully to the women, but Mrs Maine seemed quite hysterical. Miss Ross listened to what I had to say in a hard strange way; and really, if it had not been for Mrs Bantem putting a shoulder first to one wheel and then the other, nothing would have been done.

The next person I went to was Measles, who, during a cessation of the firing, was sitting, black and blood-smeared, with his head tied up, wiping out his gun with pieces he tore off the sleeves of his shirt.

'Well, Ike, mate,' he says, 'not dead yet, you see. If we get out of this, I mean to have my promotion; but I don't

see how we're going to manage it. What bothers me most is, letting these black fellows get all this powder and stuff we have here. Blow my rags if we shall ever use it all! I've been firing away till my old Bess has been so hot that I've been afraid to charge her; and I'll swear I've used twice as many cartridges as any other man. But I say, Ike, old fellow, do you think it's wrong to pot these niggers?'

'No,' I said—'not in a case like this.'

'Glad of it,' he says sincerely; 'because, do you know, old man, I've polished off such a thundering lot, that I've got to be quite narvous about getting killed myself. Only think having forty or fifty black-looking beggars rising up against you in kingdom come, and pointing at you, and saying: "That's the chap as shot me!"'

'I don't think any soldier, acting under orders, who does his duty in defence of women and children, need fear to lie down and die,' I said.

I never saw Measles look soft but that once, as, laying down his ramrod, he took my hand in his, and looked in my face for a bit; then he shook my hand softly, and nodded his head several times.

'How's Harry Lant?' he says at last.

'Very bad,' I said.

'Poor old chap. But tell him I've paid some of the beggars out for it. Mind you tell him—it'll make him feel comfortable like, and ease his mind.'

I nodded, and then told him about the plan.

'Well,' he said, as he slowly and thoughtfully polished his gun-barrel, 'it might do, and it mightn't. Seems a rum dodge; but, anyhow, we might try.'

'I shall want you to help make the bridge,' I says.

'All right, matey; but I don't, somehow, like leaving the beggars all that ammunition;' and then he loaded his rifle very thoughtfully, but only to rouse up directly after, for the mutineers began firing again; and Captain Dyer giving the

order, our men replied swift and fast at every black face that shewed itself for an instant.

That was a day: hot, so that everything you went near seemed burning. The walls even sent forth a heat of their own; and if it hadn't been for the chatties down below, we should have had to give up, for the tank was now completely dried, and the flies buzzing about its mud-caked bottom. But the women went round from man to man with water and biscuit, so that no one left his post, and every time the black scoundrels tried to make a lodgment near the gate, half were shot down, and the rest glad enough to get back into shelter.

Towards that weary slow-coming evening, though, after we had beaten them back—or, rather, after my brave comrades had beaten them back half a score of times—I saw that something was up; and as soon as I saw what that something was, I knew that it was all over, for our men were too much cut up and disheartened for any more gallant sorties.

I've not said any more about the guns, only that we spiked them, and left them standing in the market plain, about fifty yards from the gates. I may tell you now, though, that the next morning they were gone, and we forgot all about them till the night I'm telling you of, when they were dragged out again, with a lot of noise and shouting, from a building in the far corner of the square.

We didn't want telling what that meant.

It was plain enough to all of us that the scoundrels had drilled out the touch-holes again, and that during the night they would be planted, and the first discharge would drive down all our defences, and leave us open to a rush.

'We must try your plan, Smith,' says Captain Dyer with a quiet stern look. 'It is time to evacuate the place now.'

Then he knelt down and took a look at the guns with his

glass, and I knew he must have been thinking of how he stood tied to the muzzle of one of them, for he gave a sort of shudder as he closed his glass with a snap.

Just then, Miss Ross came round with Lizzy and Mrs Bantem, with wine and water, and I saw a sort of quiet triumph in Lieutenant Leigh's face, as, avoiding Captain Dyer, Miss Ross went up to him, as he half-beckoned to her, and stood by him like a slave, giving him bottle and glass, and then standing by his side with her eyes fixed and strange-looking; while, though he fought against it bravely, and tried to be unmoved, Captain Dyer could not bear it, but walked away.

I was just then drinking some water given me by Lizzy, whose pale troubled little face looked up so lovingly in mine that I felt half-ashamed for me, a poor private, to be so happy—for I forgot my wounds then—while my captain was in pain and suffering. And then it was that it struck me that Captain Dyer was just in that state in which men feel despairing, and go and do desperate things. I felt that I ought before now to have told him all about what I had heard, but I was in hopes that things would right themselves, and always came to the conclusion that it was Miss Ross's duty to have given the captain some explanation of her treatment; anyhow, it did not seem to be mine; but when I saw the poor smitten fellow go off like he did, I followed him softly till I came up with him, my heart beating the while with a curious sense of fear.

There was nothing to fear, though: he had only gone up to the roof, and when I came up with him he was evidently calculating about our escape, for he finished off by pulling out his telescope, and looking right across the plain, towards where there was a tank and a small station.

'I think that ought to be our way, Smith,' he said. 'We could stay there for half an hour's rest, and then on again towards Wallahbad, sending a couple of the stoutest

men on for help. By the way, we'll try and start a man off to-night, as soon as it's dark. Who will you have to help you?'

'I should like to have Bigley, sir,' I said.

'Will one be sufficient?'

'Quite, sir,' I said; for I thought Measles and I could manage it between us.

Half an hour after, Measles was busy at work, fetching up muskets, with bayonets fixed, from down in the vault, and laying them in order on the flat roof, taking care the while to keep out of sight; and I went to the room where the women were, under Mrs Bantem's management, getting ready for what was to come, for they had been told that we might leave the place all at once.

CHAPTER XIX.

I SUPPOSE it was my wound made me do things in a sluggish dreamy way, and made me feel ready to stop and look at any little thing which took my attention. Anyhow, that's the way I acted; and going inside that room, I stopped short just inside the place, for there were those two little children of the colonel's sitting on the floor, with a whole heap of those numbers of the Bible—those that people take in shilling parts—and with two or three large pictures in each. Some one had given them the parts to amuse themselves with; and, as grand and old-fashioned as could be, they were shewing these pictures to the soldiers' children.

As I went in they'd got a picture open, of Jacob lying asleep, with his dream spread before you, of the great flight of steps leading up into heaven, and the angels going up and down.

'There,' says little Jenny Wren to a boy half as old again as herself; 'those are angels, and they're coming down from heaven, and they've got beautiful wings like birds.'

'Oh,' says little Cock Robin thoughtfully, and he leaned over the picture. Then he says quite seriously: 'If they've dot wings, why don't they fly down?'

That was a poser; but Jenny Wren was ready with her answer, old-fashioned as could be, and she says: 'I should think it's toz they were moulting.'

I remember wishing that the poor little innocents had wings of their own, for it seemed to me that they would be a sad trouble to us to get away that night, just at the time when a child's most likely to be cross and fretful.

Night at last, dark as dark, save only a light twinkling here and there, in different parts where the enemy had made their quarters. There was a buzzing in the camp where the guns were, and as we looked over, once there came the grinding noise of a wheel, but only once.

We made sure that the gate and the broken window opening were well watched, for there was the white calico of the sentries to be seen; but soon the darkness hid them, and we should not have known that they were there but for the faint spark now and then which shewed that they were smoking, and once I heard, quite plain in the dead stillness, the sound made by a 'hubble-bubble' pipe.

We waited one hour, and then, with six of us on the roof, the plan I made began to be put into operation.

My idea was that if we could manage to cross the north alley, which as I told you was about ten feet wide, we might then go over the roof of the quarters where the mutineers were; then on to the next roof, which was a few feet lower; and from there get down on to some sheds, from which it would be easy to reach the ground, when the way would be open to us, to escape, with perhaps some hours before we were missed.

The plan was, I know, desperate, but it seemed our only chance, and, as you well know, desperate ventures will sometimes succeed when the most carefully arranged plots fail. At all events, Captain Dyer took it up, and the men under my directions, a couple of muskets were taken at a time, and putting them muzzle to muzzle, the bayonet of each was thrust down the other's barrel, which saved lashing them together, and gave us a sort of spar about ten feet long, and this was done with about fifty.

I told you that there was a tree grew up in the centre of the alley—a stunty, short-boughed tree, and to this Measles laid one of the double muskets, feeling for a bough to rest it on in the darkness, after listening whether there was any one below; then he laid more and more, till, with a mattress laid upon them, he formed a bridge, over which he boldly crept to the tree, where, with the lashings he had taken, he bound a couple more muskets horizontal, and then shifted the others. He arranged them all so that the butts of one end rested on the roof of the palace; the butts at the other end were across those he had bound pretty level in the tree. Then more and more were laid across, and a couple of thin straw mattresses on them; and though it took a tremendously long time, through Measles fumbling in the dark, it was surprising what a firm bridge that made as far as the tree.

The other half was made in just the same fashion, and much more easily. Mattresses were laid on it; and there, thirty feet above the ground, we had a tolerably firm bridge, one that, though very irregular, a man could cross with ease, creeping on his hands and knees; but then there were the women, children, and poor Harry Lant.

Captain Dyer thought it would be better to say nothing to them about it, but to bring them all quietly up at the last minute, so as to give them no time for thought and fear; and then, the last preparation being made, and a rough, short

ladder, eight feet long, Measles and I had contrived, being carried over and planted at the end of the other quarters, reaching well down to the next roof, we prepared for a start.

Measles and Captain Dyer went over with the ladder, and reported no sentries visible, the bridge pretty firm, and nothing apparently to fear, when it was decided that Harry Lant should be taken over first—Measles volunteering to take him on his back and crawl over—then the women and children were to be got over, and we were to follow.

I know it was hard work for him, but Harry Lant never gave a groan, but let them lash his hands together with a handkerchief, so that Measles put his head through the poor fellow's arms, for there was no trusting to Harry's feeble hold.

'Now then, in silence,' says Captain Dyer; 'and you, Lieutenant Leigh, get up the women and children. But each child is to be taken by a man, who is to be ready to gag the little thing if it utters a sound. Recollect, the lives of all depend on silence.—Now, Bigley, forward!'

'Wait till I spit in my hands, captain,' says Measles, though what he wanted to spit in his hands for, I don't know, without it was from use, being such a spitting man.

But spit in his hands he did, and then he was down on his hands and knees, crawling on to the mattress very slowly, and you could hear the bayonets creaking and gritting, as they played in and out of the musket-barrels; but they held firm, and the next minute Measles was as far as the tree, but only to get his load hitched somehow in a ragged branch, when there was a loud crack as of dead-wood snapping, a struggle, and Measles growled out an oath—he would swear, that fellow would, in spite of all Mrs Bantem said, so you mustn't be surprised at his doing it then.

We all stood and crouched there, with our hearts beating

horribly; for it seemed that the next moment we should hear a dull, heavy crash; but instead, there came the sharp fall of a dead branch, and at the same moment there were voices at the end of the alley.

If Captain Dyer dared to have spoken, he would have called 'Halt!' but he was silent; and Measles must have heard the voices, for he never moved, while we listened minute after minute, our necks just over the edge of the roof, till what appeared to be three of the enemy crept cautiously along through the alley, till one tripped and fell over the dead bough that must have been lying right in their way.

Then there was a horrible silence, during which we felt that it was all over with the plan—that the enemy must look up and see the bridge, and bring down those who would attack us with renewed fury.

But the next minute, there came a soft whisper or two, a light rustling, and directly after we knew that the alley was empty.

It seemed useless to go on now; but after five minutes' interval, Captain Dyer determined to pursue the plan, just as Measles came back panting to announce Harry Lant as lying on the roof beyond the officers' quarters.

'And you've no idee what a weight the little chap is,' says Measles to me.—'Now, who's next?'

No one answered; and Lieutenant Leigh stepped forward with Miss Ross. He was about to carry her over; but she thrust him back, and after scanning the bridge for a few moments, she asked for one of the children, and so as to have no time lost, the little boy, fast asleep, bless him! was put in her arms, when brave as brave, if she did not step boldly on to the trembling way, and walk slowly across.

Then Joe Bantem was sent, though he hung back for his wife, till she ordered him on, to go over with a soldier's child on his back; and he was followed by a couple more.

Next came Mrs Bantem, with Mrs Colonel Maine, and the stout-hearted woman stood as if hesitating for a minute as to how to go, when catching up the colonel's wife, as if she had been a child, she stepped on to the bridge, and two or three men held the butts of the muskets, for it seemed as if they could not bear the strain.

But though my heart seemed in my mouth, and the creaking was terrible, she passed safely over, and it was wonderful what an effect that had on the rest.

'If it 'll bear that, it 'll bear anything,' says some one close to me; and we went on, one after the other, for the most part crawling, till it came to me and Lizzy Green.

'You 'll go now,' I said; but she would not leave me, and we crept on together, till a bough of the tree hindered us, when I made her go first, and a minute after we were hand-in-hand upon the roof of the officers' quarters.

The others followed, Captain Dyer coming last, when, seeing me, he whispered: 'Where's Bigley?' of course meaning Measles.

I looked round, but it was too dark to distinguish one face from another. I had not seen him for the last quarter of an hour—not since he had asked me if I had any matches, and I had passed him half-a-dozen from my tobacco-pouch.

I asked first one, and then another, but nobody had seen Measles; and under the impression that he must have joined Harry Lant, we cautiously walked along the roof, right over the heads of our enemies; for from time to time we could hear beneath our feet the low buzzing sound of voices, and more than once came a terrible catching of the breath, as one of the children whispered or spoke.

It seemed impossible, even now, that we could escape, and I was for proposing to Captain Dyer to risk the noise, and have the bridge taken down, so as to hold the top of the building we were on as a last retreat; but I was stopped

from that by Measles coming up to me, when I told him Captain Dyer wanted him, and he crept away once more.

We got down the short ladder in safety, and then crossed a low building, to pass down the ladder on to another, which fortunately for us was empty; and then, with a little contriving and climbing, we dropped into a deserted street of the place, and all stood huddled together, while Captain Dyer and Lieutenant Leigh arranged the order of march.

And that was no light matter; but a litter was made of the short ladder, and Harry Lant laid upon it; the women and children placed in the middle; the men were divided; and the order was given in a low tone to march, and we began to walk right away into the darkness, down the straggling street; but only for the advance-guard to come back directly, and announce that they had stumbled upon an elephant picketed with a couple of camels.

'Any one with them?' said Captain Dyer.

'Could not see a soul, sir,' said Joe Bantem, for he was one of the men.

'Grenadiers, half-left,' said Captain Dyer; 'forward!' and once more we were in motion, tramp, tramp, tramp, but quite softly; Lieutenant Leigh at the rear of the first party, so as to be with Miss Ross, and Captain Dyer in the rear of all, hiding, poor fellow, all he must have felt, and seeming to give up every thought to the escape, and that only.

CHAPTER XX.

I COULD just make out the great looming figure of an elephant, as we marched slowly on, when I was startled by a low sort of wimmering noise, followed directly after by a grunting on my right.

'What's that?' says Captain Dyer. Then in an instant: 'Threes right!' he cried to the men, and they faced round, so as to cover the women and children.

There was no further alarm, though, and all seemed as silent as could be; so once more under orders, the march was continued till we were out from amidst the houses, and travelling over the sandy dusty plain; when there was another alarm—we were followed—so said the men in the rear; and sure enough, looming up against the darkness—a mass of darkness itself—we could see an elephant.

The men were faced round, and a score of pieces were directed at the great brute; but when within three or four yards, it was plain enough that it was alone, and Measles says aloud: 'Blest if it isn't old *Nabob!*'

The old elephant it was; and passing through, he went up to where Harry Lant was calling him softly, knelt down to order; and then climbing and clinging on as well as they could, the great brute's back was covered with women and children—the broad shallow howdah pretty well taking the lot—while the great beast seemed as pleased as possible to get back amongst his old friends, rubbing his trunk first on this one and then on that; and thankful we were for the help he gave us, for how else we should have got over that desert plain I can't say.

I should think we had gone a good eight miles, when Measles ranges up close aside me as I walked by the elephant, looking up at the riding-party from time to time,

and trying to make out which was Lizzy, and pitying them too, for the children were fretful, and it was a sad time they had of it up there.

'They'll have it hot there some time to-morrow morning, Ike,' says Measles to me.

'Where?' I said faintly, for I was nearly done for, and I did not take much interest in anything.

'Begumbagh,' he says. And when I asked him what he meant, he said: 'How much powder do you think there was down in that vault?'

'A good five hundredweight,' I said.

'All that,' says Measles. 'They'll have it hot, some of 'em.'

'What do you mean?' I said, getting interested.

'Oh, nothing pertickler, mate; only been arranging for promotion for some of 'em, since I can't get it myself. I took the head out of one keg, and emptied it by the others, and made a train to where I've set a candle burning; and when that candle's burnt out, it will set light to another; and that will have to burn out, when some wooden chips will catch fire, and they'll blaze a good deal, and one way and another there'll be enough to burn to last till, say, eight o'clock this morning, by which time the beauties will have got into the place; and then let 'em look out for promotion, for there's enough powder there to startle two or three of 'em.'

'That's what you wanted the matches for, then?' I said.

'That's it, matey; and what do you think of it, eh?'

'You've done wrong, my lad, I'm afraid, and'—— I didn't finish; for just then, behind us, there was a bright flashing light, followed by a dull thud; and looking back, we could see what looked like a little fire-work; and though plenty was said just then, no one but Measles and I knew what that flash meant.

'That's a dead failure,' growled Measles to me as we

went on. 'I believe I am the unluckiest beggar that ever breathed. That oughtn't to have gone off for hours yet, and now it'll let 'em know we're gone, and that's all.'

I did not say anything, for I was too weak and troubled, and how I kept up as I did, I don't know to this day.

The morning broke at last with the knowledge that we were three miles to the right of the tank Captain Dyer had meant to reach. For a few minutes, in a quiet stern way, he consulted with Lieutenant Leigh as to what should be done—whether to turn off to the tank, or to press on. The help received from old *Nabob* made them determine to press on; and after a short rest, and a better arrangement for those who were to ride on the elephant, we went on in the direction of Wallahbad, I, for my part, never expecting to reach it alive. Many a look back did I give to see if we were followed, but it was not until we were within sight of a temple by the roadside, that there was the news spread that there were enemies behind; and though I was ready enough to lay the blame upon Measles, all the same they must have soon found out our flight, and pursued us.

The sun could never have been hotter, nor the ground more parched and dusty than it was now. We were struggling on to reach that temple, which we might perhaps be able to hold till help came; for two men had been sent on to get assistance; though of all those sent, one and all were waylaid and cut down, long before they could reach our friends. But we did not know that then; and in the full hope that before long we should have help, we crawled on to the temple, but only to find it so wide and exposed, that in our weak condition it was little better than being in the open. There was a building, though, about a hundred yards farther on, and towards that we made, every one rousing himself for what was really the last struggle, for not a quarter of a mile off, there was a yelling crowd of blood-hounds in eager pursuit.

It was with a panting rush that we reached the place, to find it must have been the house of the collector of the district; but it was all one wrack and ruin—glass, tables, and chairs smashed; hangings and carpets burnt or ragged to pieces, and in one or two places, blood-stains on the white floor, told a terrible tale of what had taken place not many days before.

The elephant stopped and knelt, and the women and children were passed in as quickly as possible; but before all could be got in, about a dozen of the foremost mutineers were down upon us with a savage rush—I say *us*, but I was helpless, and only looking on from inside—two of our fellows were cut down in an instant, and the others borne back by the fierce charge. Then followed a desperate struggle, ending in the black fellows dragging off Miss Ross and one of the children that she held.

They had not gone many yards, though, before Captain Dyer and Lieutenant Leigh seemed to see the peril together, and shouting to our men, sword in hand they went at the black fiends, well supported by half-a-dozen of our poor wounded chaps.

There was a rush, and a cloud of dust; then there was the noise of yells and cheers, and Captain Dyer shouting to the men to come on; and it all acted like something intoxicating on me, for, catching up a musket, I was making for the door, when I felt an arm holding me back, and I did what I must have done as soon as I got outside—reeled and fainted dead away.

CHAPTER XXI.

It was a couple of hours after when I came to, and became sufficiently sensible to know that I was lying with my head in Lizzy's lap, and Harry Lant close beside me. It was very dim, and the heat seemed stifling, so that I asked Lizzy where we were, and she told me in the cellar of the house—a large wide vault, where the women, children, and wounded had been placed for safety, while the noise and firing above told of what was taking place.

I was going to ask about Miss Ross, but just then I caught sight of her trying to support her sister, and to keep the children quiet.

As I got more used to the gloom, I made out that there was a small iron grating on one side, through which came what little light and air we got; on the other, a flight of stone steps leading up to where the struggle was going on. There was a strong wooden door at the top of this, and twice that door was opened for a wounded man to be brought down; when, coolly as if she were in barracks, there was that noble woman, Mrs Bantem, tying up and binding sword-cuts and bayonet-thrusts as she talked cheerily to the men.

The struggle was very fierce still, the men who brought down the wounded hurrying away, for there was no sign of flinching; but soon they were back with another poor fellow, who was now whimpering, now muttering fiercely. 'If I'd only have had—confound them!—if I'd only had another cartridge or two, I wouldn't have cared,' he said as they laid him down close by me; 'but I always was the unluckiest beggar on the face of the earth. They've most done for me, Ike, and no wonder, for it's all fifty to one up there, and I don't believe a man of ours has a shot left.'

Again the door closed on the two men who had brought down poor Measles, hacked almost to pieces; and again it was opened, to bring down another wounded man, and this one was Lieutenant Leigh. They laid him down, and were off back up the steps, when there was a yelling, like as if some evil spirits had broken loose, and as the door was opened, Captain Dyer and half-a-dozen more were beaten back, and I thought they would have been followed down—but no; they stood fast in that doorway, Captain Dyer and the six with him, while the two fellows who had been down leaped up the stairs to support them, so that, in that narrow opening, there were eight sharp British bayonets, and the captain's sword, making such a steel hedge as the mutineers could not pass.

They could not contrive either to fire at our party, on account of the wall in front, and every attempt at an entrance was thwarted; but we all knew that it was only a question of time, for it was impossible for man to do more.

There seemed now to be a lull, and only a buzzing of voices above us, mingled with a groan and a dying cry now and then, when I quite forgot my pain once more on hearing poor Harry Lant, who had for some time been quite off his head, and raving, commence talking in a quiet sort of way.

'Where's Ike Smith?' he said. 'It's all dark here; and I want to say good-bye to him.'

I was kneeling by his side the next minute, holding his hand.

'God bless you, Ike,' he said; 'and God bless her. I'm going, old mate; kiss her for me, and tell her that if she hadn't been made for you, I could have loved her very dearly.'

What could I do or say, when the next minute Lizzy was kneeling on his other side, holding his hand?

'God bless you both,' he whispered. 'You'll get out of the trouble after all; and don't forget me.'

We promised him we would not, as well as we could, for we were both choked with sorrow; and then he said, talking quickly: 'Give poor old Sam Measles my tobacco-box, Ike, the brass one, and shake hands with him for me; and now I want Mother Bantem.'

She was by his side directly, to lift him gently in her arms, calling him her poor gallant boy, her brave lad, and no end of fond expressions.

'I never had a bairn, Harry,' she sobbed; 'but if I could have had one, I'd have liked him to be like you, my own gallant, light-hearted soldier boy; and you were always to me as a son.'

'Was I?' says Harry softly. 'I'm glad of it, for I never knew what it was to have a mother.'

He seemed to fall off to sleep after that, when, no one noticing them, those two children came up, and the first I heard of it was little Clive crying: 'Ally Lant—Ally Lant, open eyes, and come and play wis elfant.'

I started, and looked up to see one of those little innocents —his face smeared, and his little hands all dabbled with blood, trying to open poor Harry Lant's eyes with his tiny fingers.

'Why don't Ally Lant come and play with us?' says the other; and just then he opened his eyes, and looked at them with a smile, when in a moment I saw what was happening, for that poor fellow's last act was to get those two children's hands in his, as if he felt that he should like to let his last grasp in this world be upon something innocent; and then there was a deepening of that smile into a stern look, his lips moved, and all was over; while I was too far off to hear his last words.

But there was one there who did hear them, and she told me afterwards, sobbing as though her heart would break.

'Poor Harry, poor light-hearted Harry,' Mother Bantem

said. 'And did you see the happy smile upon his face as he passed away, clasping those two poor children's hands—so peaceful, so quiet, after all his suffering; forgetting all then, but what seemed like two angels' faces by his dying pillow, for he said, Ike, he said'——

Poor Mother Bantem broke down here, and I thought about what Harry's dying pillow had been—her faithful, old, motherly breast. But she forced back her sobs, and wiped the tears from her rough, plain face, as she said in low, reverent tones: 'Poor Harry! His last words: "Of such is the kingdom of Heaven."'

Death was very busy amongst our poor company, and one —two—three more passed away there, for they were riddled with wounds; and then I saw that, in spite of all that could be done, Lieutenant Leigh would be the next. He had received his death-wound, and he knew it too; and now he lay very still, holding tightly by Miss Ross's hand, while she knelt beside him.

Captain Dyer, with his eight men, all left, were still keeping the door; but of late they had not been interfered with, and the poor fellows were able to do one another a good turn in binding up wounds. But what all were now suffering for want of, was water; and beyond a few drops in one or two of the bottles carried by the women, there was none to be had.

As for me, I could only lie there helpless, and in a half-dreamy way, see and listen to all that was going on. The spirit in me was good to help; but think of my state—going for days with that cut on the face, and a broken arm, and in that climate.

I was puzzling myself about this time as to what was going to happen next, for I could not understand why the rebels were so quiet; but the next minute I was watching Lieutenant Leigh, and thinking about the morning when we saw Captain Dyer bound to the muzzle of the nine-pounder.

Could he have been thinking about the same thing? I say *yes*, for all at once he started right up, looking wild and excited. He had hold of Miss Ross's hand; but he threw it from him, as he called out: 'Now, my lads, a bold race, and a short one. We must bring them in. Spike the guns—cut the cords. Now, then—Elsie or death. Are you ready there? Forward!'

That last word rang through the vault we were in, and Captain Dyer ran down the steps, his hacked sword hanging from his wrist by the knot. But he was too late to take his messmate's hand in his, and say *farewell*, if that had been his intention, for Lieutenant Leigh had fallen back; and that senseless figure by his side was to all appearance as dead, when, with a quivering lip, Captain Dyer gently lifted her, and bore her to where, half stupefied, Mrs Colonel Maine was sitting.

CHAPTER XXII.

I GOT rather confused, and am to this day, about how the time went; things that only took a few minutes seeming to be hours in happening, and what really did take a long time gliding away as if by magic. I think I was very often in a half-delirious state; but I can well remember what was the cause of the silence above.

Captain Dyer was the first to see, and taking a rifle in his hand, he whispered an order or two; and then he, with two more, rushed into the passage, and got the door drawn towards us, for it opened outwards; but in so doing, he slipped on the floor, and fell with a bayonet-thrust through his shoulder, when, with a yell of rage—it was no cheer this time—our men dashed forward, and dragged him in; the door was pulled to, and held close; and then those poor wounded fellows—heroes I call 'em—stood angrily muttering.

I think I got more excited over that scene than over any part of the struggle, and all because I was lying there helpless; but it was of no use to fret, though I lay there with the weak tears running down my cheeks, as that brave man was brought down, and laid near the grating, with Mother Bantem at work directly to tear off his coat, and begin to bandage, as if she had been brought up in a hospital.

The door was forsaken, for there was a new guard there, that no one would try to pass, for the silence was explained to us all: first, there was a loud yelling and shrieking outside; and then there was a little thin blue wreath of smoke beginning to curl under the door, crawling along the top step, and collecting like so much blue water, to spread very slowly; for the fiends had been carrying out their wounded and dead, and were now going to burn us where we lay.

I can recollect all that; for now a maddening sense of horror seemed to come upon me, to think that those few poor souls left were to be slain in such a barbarous way, after all the gallant struggle for life; but what surprised me was the calm, quiet way in which all seemed to take it.

Once, indeed, the men had a talk together, and asked the women to join them in a rush through the passage; but they gave up the thought directly, for they knew that if they could get by the flames, there were more cruel foes outside, waiting to thrust them back.

So they all sat down in a quiet, resigned way, listening to the crackle outside the door, watching the thin smoke filter through the crevices, and form in clouds, or pools, according to where it came through.

And you'd have wondered to see those poor fellows, how they acted: why, Joe Bantem rubbed his face with his handkerchief, smoothed his hair and whiskers, and then

got his belts square, as if off out on parade, before going and sitting quietly down by his wife.

Measles lay very still, gently humming over the old child's hymn, *Oh! that'll be joyful,* but only to burst out again into a fit of grumbling.

Another went and knelt down in a corner, where he stayed; the rest shook hands all round, and then, seeing Captain Dyer sitting up, and sensible, they went and saluted him, and asked leave to shake hands with him, quite upsetting him, poor fellow, as he called them, in a faint voice, his 'brave lads,' and asked their pardon, if he'd ever been too harsh with them.

'God bless you! no, sir,' says Joe Bantem, jumping up, and shaking the hand himself, 'which *that* you've never been, but always a good officer as your company loved. Keep a brave heart, my boys, it'll soon be over. We've stood in front of death too many times now to shew the white-feather. Hurray for Captain Dyer, and may he have his regiment in the tother land, and we be some of his men!'

Joe Bantem gave a bit of a reel as he said this, and then he'd have fallen if it hadn't been for his wife; and though his was rather strong language, you see it must be excused, for, leave alone his wounds, and the mad feeling they'd bring on, there was a wild excitement on the men then, brought on by the fighting, which made them, as you may say, half-drunk.

We must all have been choked over and over again, but for that grating; for the hotter the fire grew above, the finer current of air swept in. The mutineers could not have known of it, or one of their first acts must have been to seal it up. But it was half-covered by some creeping flower, which made it invisible to them, and so we were able to breathe.

And now it may seem a curious thing, but I'm going to

say a little more about love. A strange time, you 'll perhaps say, when those poor people were crouching together in that horrible vault, expecting their death moment by moment. But that's why it was, and not from any want of retiring modesty. I believe that those poor souls wished to shew those they loved how true was that feeling; and therefore it was that wife crept to husband's side, and Lizzy Green, forgetting all else now, placed her arms round my neck, and her lips to mine, and kissed me again and again.

It was no time for scruples; and thus it was that, being close to them, I heard Miss Ross, kneeling by the side of Captain Dyer, ask him, sobbing bitterly the while—ask him to forgive her, while he looked almost cold and strange at her, till she whispered to him long and earnestly, when I knew that she must be telling him all about the events of that morning. It must have been, for with a cry of joy I saw him bend towards her, when she threw her arms round him, and clasped his poor bleeding form to her breast.

They were so when I last looked upon them, and every one seemed lost in his or her own suffering, all save those two children, one of whom was asleep on Mrs Maine's lap, and the other playing with the gold knot of Captain Dyer's sword.

Then came a time of misty smoke and heat, and the crackling of woodwork; but all the while there was a stream of hot pure air rushing in at that grating to give us life.

We could hear the black fiends running round and round the burning building, yelling, and no doubt ready to thrust back any one who tried to get out. But there seemed then to come another misty time, from which I was roused by Lizzy whispering to me: 'Is it very near now?'

'What?' I said faintly.

'Death,' she whispered, with her lips close to my ear. 'If it is, pray God that He will never let us part again in the land where all is peace!'

I tried to answer her, but I could not, for the hot, stifling blinding smoke was now in my throat, when the yelling outside seemed to increase. There was a loud rushing sound; the trampling of horses; the jingling of cavalry sabres; a loud English hurray; and a crash; and I knew that there was a charge of horse sweeping by. Then came the hurried beating of feet, the ring of platoon after platoon of musketry, a rapid, squandering, skirmishing fire; more yelling, and more English cheers; the rush, again, of galloping horses; and, by slow degrees, the sound of a fierce skirmish, growing more and more distant, till there came another rapid beating of hoofs, a sudden halt, the jingle and rattle of harness, and a moment after, bim—bom—bom—bom! at regular intervals; and I waved my hand, and gave a faint cheer, for I could mentally see it all: a troop of light-horse had charged twice; the infantry had come up at the double; and now here were the horse-artillery, with their light six-pounders, playing upon the retreating rebels where the cavalry were not cutting them up.

That faint cheer of mine brought out some more; and then there was a terrible silence, for the relief seemed to have come too late; but a couple of our men crawled to the grating, where the air reviving them, they gave another 'Hurray!' which was answered directly.

And then there was a loud shout, the excited buzz of voices, the crashing of a pioneer's axe against the frame-work of the grating; and after a hard fight, from which our friends were beaten back again and again, we poor wretches, nearly all insensible, were dragged out about a quarter of an hour before the burning house fell with a crash. Then there was a raging whirlwind of flame, and smoke, and sparks, and the cellar was choked up with the burning ruin.

CHAPTER XXIII.

How well I remember coming to myself as I lay there on the grass, with our old surgeon, Mr Hughes, kneeling by my side; for it was our own men that formed the infantry of the column, with a troop of lancers, and one of horse-artillery. There was Colonel Maine kneeling by his wife, who, poor soul, was recovering fast, and him turning from her to the children, and back again; while it was hard work to keep our men from following up the pursuit, now kept up by the lancers and horse-artillery, so mad and excited were they to find only eight wounded men out of the company they had left.

But, one way and another, the mutineers paid dear for what suffering they caused us. I can undertake to say that, for every life they took, half-a-dozen of their own side fell—the explosion swept away, I suppose, quite fifty, just as they had attempted a surprise, and came over from the south side in a night-attack; while the way in which they were cut up in the engagement was something awful.

For, anxious beyond measure at not hearing news of the party left in Begumbagh, Colonel Maine had at length obtained permission to go round by that station, reinforce the troops, and then join the general by another route.

They were making forced marches, when they caught sight of the rebels yelling round the burning building, fully a couple of hundred being outside; when, not knowing of the sore strait of those within, they had charged down, driving the murderous black scoundrels before them like so much chaff.

But you must not think that our pains were at an end. Is it not told in the pages of history how for long enough it

was a hard fight for a standing in India, and how our troops were in many places sore put to it; while home after home was made desolate by the most cruel outrages! It was many a long week before we could be said to be in safety; but I don't know that I suffered much beyond the pains of that arm, or rather that stump, for our surgeon, Mr Hughes, when I grumbled a little at his taking it off, told me I might be very thankful that I had escaped with life, for he had never known of such a case before.

But it was rather hard lying alone there in the temporary hospital, missing the tender hands that one loved.

And yet I have no right to say quite alone, for poor old Measles was on one side, and Joe Bantem on the other, with Mrs Bantem doing all she could for us three, as well as five more of our poor fellows.

More than once I heard Mr Hughes talk about the men's wounds, and say it was wonderful how they could live through them; but live they all seemed disposed to, except poor Measles, who was terrible bad and delirious, till one day, when he could hardly speak above a whisper, he says to me—being quite in his right mind: 'I daresay some of you chaps think that I'm going to take my discharge; but all the same, you're wrong, for I mean to go in now for promotion!'

He said 'now;' but what he did then was to go in for sleep—and sleep he did for a good four-and-twenty hours—when he woke up grumbling, and calling himself the most unlucky beggar that ever breathed.

Time went on; and one by one we poor fellows got out of hospital cured; but I was the last; and it was many months after, that, at his wish, I called upon Captain—then Major—Dyer, at his house in London. For, during those many months, the mutiny had been suppressed, and our regiment had been ordered home.

I was very weak and pale, and I hadn't got used to this empty sleeve, and things looked very gloomy ahead; but, somehow, that day when I called at Major Dyer's seemed the turning-point; for, to a poor soldier there was something very soothing for your old officer to jump up, with both hands outstretched to catch yours, and to greet you as warmly as did his handsome, bonny wife.

They seemed as if they could hardly make enough of me; but the sight of their happiness made me feel low-spirited; and I felt no better when Mrs Dyer—God bless her!—took my hand in hers, and led me to the next room, where she said there was an old friend wanted to see me.

I felt that soft jewelled hand holding mine, and I heard the door close as Mrs Dyer went out again, and then I stood seeing nothing—hearing nothing—feeling nothing, but a pair of clinging arms round my neck, and a tear-wet face pressed to mine.

And did that make me feel happy?

No! I can say it with truth. For as the mist cleared away from my eyes, and I looked down on, to me, the brightest, truest face the sun ever shone on, there was a great sorrow in my heart, as I told myself that it was a sin and a wrong for me, a poor invalided soldier, to think of taking advantage of that fine handsome girl, and tying her down to one who was maimed for life.

And at last, with the weak tears running down my cheeks, I told her of how it could not be: that I should be wronging her, and that she must think no more of me, only as a dear friend; when there is that amount of folly in this world, that my heart swelled, and a great ball seemed rising in my throat, and I choked again and again, as those arms clung tighter and tighter round my neck, and Lizzy called me her hero, and her brave lad who had saved her life again and again; and asked me to take her to my heart,

and keep her there; for her to try and be to me a worthy loving wife—one that would never say a bitter word to me as long as she lived.

I said that there was so much folly in this world, so how can you wonder at me catching it of her, when she was so close that I could feel her breath upon my cheeks, my hair, my eyes, as once more, forgetting all in her love, she kissed me again and again. How, then, could I help, but with that one hand press her to my heart, and go the way that weak heart of mine wished.

I know it was wrong; but how can one always fight against weakness. And, to tell you the truth, I had fought long enough—so long that I wished for peace. And I must say this, too, you must not be hard on Lizzy, and think that it would have been better for her to have let me do a little more of the courting: there are exceptional cases, and this was one.

I had a true friend in Major Dyer, and to him I owe my present position—not a very grand one; but speaking honestly as a man, I don't believe, if I had been a general, some one at home could think more of me; while, as to this empty sleeve, she's proud of it, and says that all the country is the same.

Wandering about as a regiment is, one does not often have a chance to see one's old messmates; but Sergeant and Mrs Bantem and Sergeant Measles did have tea and supper with us one night here in London, Mrs Bantem saying that Measles was as proud of his promotion as a dog with two tails, though Measles did say he was an unlucky beggar, or he'd have been a captain. And, my! what a night we did have of that, without one drawback, only Measles would spit on my wife's Brussels carpet; and so we did have a night last year when the old regiment was stationed at Edinburgh, and the wife and me had a holiday,

and went down and saw Colonel and Mrs Maine, and those children grown up a'most into a man and woman. But Colonel Dyer had exchanged into another regiment, and they say he is going to retire on half-pay, on account of his wound troubling him.

We fought our old battles over again on those nights; and we did not forget the past and gone; for Mrs Bantem stood up after supper, with her stiff glass of grog in her hand—a glass into which I saw a couple of tears fall—as she spoke of the dead—the brave men who fell in defence of the defenceless and innocent, hoping that the earth lay lightly on the grave of Lieutenant Leigh, while she proposed the memory of brave Harry Lant.

We drank that toast in silence; and more than one eye was wet as the old scenes came back—scenes such as I hope may never fall to the lot of men again to witness; for if there is ever a fervent prayer sent up to the Maker of All, by me, an old soldier, who has much to answer for, it is contained in those words, so familiar to you all at the season of Christmas:

'PEACE ON EARTH!' *Amen.*

END OF BEGUMBAGH.

THROUGH FIRE AND WATER.

I THINK I must have been born with a travelling mania, for, from my earliest childhood, travelling has been my delight; and destiny has so far seconded my desire, that I have been a traveller from my cradle. With pleasure I commenced a journey, with pleasure pursued it, and usually with pleasure ended it. I was never sea-sick, never land-sick, and, in my earlier travels, never home-sick, for all I loved were with me. The proverb says, 'A rolling stone gathers no moss,' and I am not in a position to deny its truth; but the traveller lays up a rich store of thoughts and memories that will gladden more than gold the evening of his days, and before his mind's-eye there moves an ever-changing diorama, bringing back to him the bright scenes of his youth with a vividness that gilds the gray hairs of his age.

My first travelling adventure of any consequence was in South Africa—and it now stands before me as distinctly as if it was but twelve days instead of twelve long years since I dwelt in the lighthouse-looking fort, perched on a rocky promontory overlooking the surging green sea of the Fish River bush, from which my red-coated companions and I kept close watch for the Kaffirs, who never came within

sight of our telescopes. What a dreary and monotonous life I found it, despite the beautiful scenery that surrounded us, and the occasional *commandoes* on which we were sent out; and when, at the end of three months, I received orders to take command of another officer's detachment, at a post nearer to the frontier, how rejoiced I was, for I trusted that there a more soldierly life was in store for me, and I knew that, at all events, I should have the pleasant excitement of a journey.

There were two routes by which I might reach Fort Nash, the more circuitous of which was a wagon-track, while the shorter one was practicable only for horses; despatching my baggage and servant by the former, I set out myself on the latter, attended by a mounted rifleman, in the double capacity of escort and guide. And a tight Cossack-looking fellow was Steermann Draghooner, in his green jacket and leather trousers, with his rifle slung by his side, despite his Hollandish appellation and the flat Hottentot features, half hidden beneath the peak of his shako. There was infinite intelligence and good-humour gleaming in his rat-like eyes, and the white teeth that shone forth from beneath his woolly moustache. Yet once or twice I could not help smiling at the idea of this being my protector, as I looked back at the little fellow, perched, monkey-like, on the back of his large steed, following me so gravely down the steep rugged path leading to the nearest *drift* or ford across the Fish River. But as a guide he was invaluable, for I knew not a single foot of the way; and therefore, as soon as we reached the bank of the river, our positions changed, and Draghooner, putting spurs to his horse, trotted on in advance.

Before us glided the river, filling almost to the brim its canal-like bed, for there had recently been rain among the mountains; while the rapidly rising tide was still further increasing its volume. Crossing the river obliquely, there

was a line of broken water, rising occasionally into surges, which burst with a hoarse murmur, and lost themselves in the whirling eddies the opposing currents caused to froth immediately above. This line of breakers covered a ridge of rock, shelving irregularly on the lower side, and precipitous on the upper, its summit being our path across the river; a sufficiently perilous one at any time, for it is only during very low tides that the eye of the steed or his rider can see where the foot of the former is to be placed; but now rendered infinitely more hazardous by the unusual depth of the stream and its increased velocity.

But with his usual quiet aspect, the Hottentot brought his horse to the brink, and the animal stepped into the water with a readiness which must have been the result of experience; for my own English-bred horse at first refused to follow his example, rearing and curveting on the bank, as if resolved not to wet a fetlock. At length, considerable coaxing, and the sight of the troop-horse far in advance, induced him to enter, when he went picking his way cautiously along his unseen path, as if he knew the truth —that a single false step would send him over the ledge among the gurgling eddies which wreathed themselves almost within reach of my hand. But he betrayed no further repugnance to the foaming waters, save now and then a snort when they surged up unpleasantly near his nose.

I had advanced nearly to the middle of the river, and had reached a part where the breakers were becoming larger, when a loud snort or puff, apparently close at hand, startled me, and sent my horse plunging almost over the ridge. I looked hastily round, but nothing was to be observed except what appeared to be an old shapeless boat, turned bottom up, coming floating down with the stream. Could that sound, I thought, be the smothered cry of some unfortunate being drowning beneath the over-

turned boat? and I spurred on my horse, hoping I might be in time to aid a fellow-creature perishing so near.

Another moment, and the old boat reached the ridge, and immediately, to my astonishment, began to rise above it, higher and higher, until there stood out in contrast with the snowy foam a huge black head, garnished with two gleaming tusks. Both horse and rider stood still and silent with amazement, as next came forth the shoulders, and then the body and rock-like legs of an enormous hippopotamus, down whose wrinkled sides the slimy mud, which the water had diluted without being able to wash off, rolled in inky rivulets, while the huge creature puffed and panted as if wearied by the effort he had made.

I felt more astonished than alarmed at the sight of my new neighbour, for I knew that a meeting with a hippopotamus is rarely dangerous, if he is not meddled with; and I confidently expected he would shortly continue his route down the river. But, to my great discomfiture, he turned sharply to the right-about, so as to face me, and commenced his rolling march towards the shore along the very path in which I stood. My horse started back, neighing in affright, and became nearly unmanageable, while onward the monster came, splashing recklessly among the breakers. Had I been on dry land or in smooth water, I would have turned round, and fled without striking a blow in my own defence. As it was, I dared not venture on such a step, lest my horse should stumble and be swept down the river, with whose course and dangers I was unacquainted. The only plan, therefore, left me was to retire before the intruder as I would from the presence of royalty—that is, backwards; and a very difficult matter I found it, for my horse was trembling with fear and anger, as he gazed with starting eyeballs on the immense creature before him, and restive at being forced backward along a path the dangers of which he knew, but could not see, and of which I myself could

only guess the direction by the line of foam stretching before me.

Meanwhile, the new-comer, rolling lazily along, drew every moment nearer, yet still appeared unconscious of our presence, unless I was correct in fancying that there was a wicked gleam twinkling in his small sunken eye. How much force that thought added to the desire already boiling within me, to discharge my pistol into that sole vulnerable spot! But prudence deterred me, by reminding me how small 'was my chance of slaying my adversary compared with that of enraging him; and so, with the best grace I could, I retreated along the path I had found so difficult when advancing. But oh! when we reached the shallow water, and turning off, were able to dash along the bank, how wild a neigh of joy burst from my horse's lips—if ever there was an equine 'huzza,' it was that!

When my steed's mad gambols were over, and I had space to look round me, there was the hippopotamus rolling slowly after us. But he soon turned off towards the river, and let himself luxuriously down into a huge mud-pond among the sedge, breathing forth his satisfaction in loud grunts, that sent the birds fluttering off from the neighbouring trees.

Having seen the enemy thus safely disposed of, I returned to the drift, on the further bank of which Steermann Draghooner was standing in evident astonishment, and once more essayed to cross the ridge. But scarcely had my horse entered the water, when I found the tide was now nearly full, and that he was compelled to swim. However, the animal's blood was up, and he made no difficulty, but breasted the rushing waters gallantly, cutting his way through them with the boldness and grace of a water-dog. It was well he possessed the energy and courage, for, as we got farther into the stream, I perceived that, no longer opposed by the tide, the swollen current was running rapidly, and that we were unable to hold our way. Farther and

farther down it swept us, despite my good steed's efforts and the encouraging cries of Steermann; and though we gradually neared the other bank, I began to think the passage of the Fish River would prove a more serious matter than I had anticipated, for the grassy bank was beginning to be checkered by patches of impervious jungle, which I feared would shortly prevail. But I need not have troubled myself; for the next minute my horse threw back his head, striking me on the forehead, and sending me reeling from the saddle.

When I recovered recollection, I was lying on the grass a little below the drift, and the first object which met my eyes was the dripping form of Steermann Draghooner bending anxiously over me. My gallant little escort! he had thrown himself into the water, and at the risk of his own life saved mine. Brave-hearted Hottentot! how little he made of the deed, and how little he comprehended my gratitude, or the reason that made me thenceforth his fast friend. Meantime, left to himself, my horse had scrambled to land, and now stood with drooping head awaiting my recovery. But it was more than an hour ere I was fit for the wearying walk up the steep hill which bounded the Fish River valley on the Kaffirland side, where the rocks and stumps obliged us to lead our horses.

At length the ascent was achieved, and gladly we vaulted on our steeds to refresh our spirits by a canter over the level prairie, and make up in some measure for lost time. On we went, laughing to see the wondrous bounds of the springboks or Cape antelopes, and the ungainly carriage of the ostriches, as they sped along in mortal terror at our appearance. At length some dark specks became visible at a distance on the plateau, but were soon lost again among the groups of trees that dotted the plain like islands in a grassy sea. I inquired of my companion whether they were hartebeests or gnus—two animals I had never seen.

'Dem Kaffir, sur,' replied Steermann, drawing near; 'and dey got no pass.'

'How do you know?' I asked.

''Cos dey hide. Ah, de black tief come for plenty troobles,' ejaculated my escort, shaking his head with an air of experience.

Having no opinion to give, I held my peace, and rode quickly on, directing my course close by the green isles where the black specks had taken shelter, mentally resolving to inquire into the truth of the Hottentot's suspicions. As I drew near the groups of trees, the light feathery foliage of the acacias that composed them forbade the thought that they could conceal a Bushman, far less a party of stalwart Kaffirs. At last I approached one which the thickly clothed branches of the laurel and the wild plum rendered nearly impervious. Here, if anywhere, were the fugitives; and cantering round to the opposite side, followed by Steermann, I came on a party of four coal-black Kaffirs, crouched beneath the trees, each with his bundle of assegais laid close by his side.

Calling Draghooner forward, through his interpretation I demanded to see the pass by which alone a Kaffir was entitled to enter the territory between the Fish River and the Keiskamma, and then only unarmed. My trusty attendant had divined rightly, for there was no pass forthcoming, and the clumsy excuse they made of having lost it on the way, was too palpable; so, assuming an air of official dignity, I reproved them for being found in the neutral territory without a proper authority, and commanded them to return at once into Kaffirland. But even while speaking, there came over me a sense of the ludicrous, in the idea that I with but the two rifle barrels of my escort at command—for my gun had been lost in the river, and my pistols wetted completely—should thus defy men, who had each, lying by their right hands, the price of five lives. Fortunately, the

Kaffirs did not view the affair in the same light, but with an affectation of great humility, they gathered up their weapons and karosses, and departed across the flat, comforting themselves, probably, with the reflection, that any other moonless night would serve their turn as well.

Having arranged this business, I was at liberty to pursue my journey, though the tall grass among which we had now entered, reaching sometimes to our horses' knees, at others nearly to our own, was a great impediment to our progress. Owing to this, together with the long delay at the drift, night fell while we were still many miles from Fort Nash; the road was bad too, and there was no moon, so we had nothing for it but to unsaddle beneath the nearest acacia patch. This necessity in so delicious a climate we should have regarded as no great hardship, had we only been provided with supper; but though many a buck and hare had crossed our path that day, we had been in too great haste to draw trigger at them; so our repast consisted only of a few biscuits and the contents of my hunting-flask.

But short-commons and fatigue appeared to have no effect on the spirits and energies of Steermann Draghooner, who bustled about as if all the duties of an establishment devolved on him—knee-haltering the horses, and turning them off to feed—gathering sticks and making a fire on a spot he had previously denuded of the tall, dry prairie-grass that covered the whole region—searching about to discover whether any birds or hares resided in our neighbourhood, or any ostrich-eggs had been deposited about; and though all his quests were fruitless, still not losing heart, but whistling, as with a wisp of grass he rubbed down the horses before he tied them to a tree, to insure their being forthcoming in the morning. Long after fatigue and my river-adventure had made me glad to roll myself in my cloak, and making a pillow of my saddle, stretch myself on the soft, dry grass,

I could see his dark form sitting in the fire-light; and every now and then, as I stirred in my sleep, the tones of his low, sweet voice, as he sang the long-drawn cadences of Dutch hymns, echoed in my ear.

At length the Southern Cross had mounted high into the heavens, the fire died out, and Steermann, wrapping himself in his cloak, lay down beside it. We must have slept for hours, when I was suddenly awakened by the loud neighing and stamping of the horses, and then I became conscious of a suffocating sensation, as though the sirocco were blowing over me, and covering me with its burning sand, and an impetuous rushing sound seemed filling my ears.

I sat up instantly, but the oppressive heat was still around me, and louder than ever was that strange sound, while the whole atmosphere was filled with a lurid glare. Calling on Steermann, I sprang to my feet, and looking round me, saw that we were inclosed by a wall of fire. On every side were long forked tongues of flame leaping up wildly into the air, or springing on the scattered acacia-trees, and wreathing them with their fearful beauty for a few moments, till they fell into the blazing sea below; for like billows of fire did the conflagration rage, rolling along with almost incredible speed, as the dry prairie-grass yielded quickly to its influence; while, above all, the deep, hoarse voice of the furious element rose in triumph.

Thus surrounded, my companion and I stood beneath the trees beside our struggling horses, while the hot thick smoke that now began to roll in volumes over us, oppressed our breathing, and confused our scarcely awakened senses; while the burning belt drew rapidly closer. It was a fearful moment, and we gazed on the scene around us in silent horror. Heaven grant that when death really comes, he may not come in that guise. Suddenly the Hottentot beside me cried in a sharp, bitter tone: 'Dem rascal Kaffir, dey fire de grass all round—hope roast us like buck!'

'Then we can do nothing?' I asked, roused from my bewilderment.

'Noting, sur; only die,' was the desponding reply. 'We got no wings to fly, and would need jump higher than springbok to jump dat fire. Oh, it hard to die while Kaffir laugh!' he added bitterly. 'If me could only catch him!' and he raised his rifle menacingly, the next moment to throw it down in despair; then going over to his horse, he took his head silently between his hands, and leaned his own face upon it. The horse ceased its restless stamping: they were friends, that horse and man, and it seemed as if the fond caress brought comfort to the hearts of both.

But it is not in the nature of an Englishman to yield his life without a struggle to save it. I looked round. The onward roll of the fiery waves made the view a narrow one: I glanced at the trees above our heads, but the sight of one blazing not far distant reminded me that they too would share the general destruction. Then I thought of the grass: could we not tear away sufficient—for men work hard when the wage is life—to permit us to stand in safety, though the flames raged around us? I made the attempt, but the strong wiry grass resisted; I only cut my hands. How bitterly, now when too late, I repented our want of caution in passing the night where there was no water; but our horses had drunk half an hour before we stopped, and it was some distance to the next *vly* or pond.

In such times, much both of thought and action is crowded into a short space. It was not more than ten minutes since I awoke, and already the flames had approached so near that I could feel their burning breath upon my cheek. It seemed as if the martyr's fate was close upon us, without the martyr's holy motive to bear us up. I felt I had not nerve to watch that fiery death advancing upon us fathom by fathom; I could better meet it in the bustle and hurry of action; and calling to Steermann to follow my example, I sprang on

my horse's back, and putting spurs to his sides, galloped him madly at the flames.

On we went, through a body of living fire that rent our skins and burned our hair and clothes; on through a plain of burning stubble that burned our horses' feet; on, with a speed greater than that of the fleetest racer, while our blazing garments flew on the wind behind us; on, on, until at length we reached water. And only they who have passed through a like fiery ordeal can tell with what delight both men and horses cast themselves into the cool element.

At last day broke, and, remounting our suffering horses, we rode on to Fort Nash, where we arrived so burned, blackened, and haggard, that none could recognise us; and it was many weeks ere any of us, biped or quadruped, recovered the effects of that momentous ride through fire and water.

THE DETECTIVE IN AMERICA.

BEING off duty for the time, and the evening close and sultry, I was just settling myself in the open window of my lodgings, to smoke a quiet pipe, when another member of the force came to tell me that I was wanted by the superintendent. I went at once as required.

'Banks,' said the superintendent to me, when I was in his room, and the door shut, 'we have got a clue at last towards finding that man Jennings.'

'Indeed, sir, I am glad to hear you say so, answered I, and I spoke the truth. Uncommonly glad I was, for our profession, like the rest, has its pride about it, and we had been a good deal twitted in the newspapers for not having succeeded, during seven months of fruitless search, in securing that particular criminal. A shy bird was that Jennings. His doubles and twists had baffled some of the deepest heads in the police, and although we had often come upon his hiding-place just after he had left it, we never could lay hands on him. He was not a common offender. Well educated, and born in a very respectable station of life, he might have done well, and made an honest fortune, if he could but have kept straight. He was clever, and a

first-rate accountant, and got the post of cashier to the —— Bank while still quite a young man. I need hardly repeat his story—how he forged, and altered figures in pass-books, and played ducks and drakes with the floating balance of his employers. It is a common narrative. He went off at last, just when detection grew certain, and carried with him nineteen thousand pounds, besides valuable papers and securities for a large amount. Every exertion was made, no expense was spared, and many times we seemed sure of him as he prowled up and down the country in various disguises; but at last the scent grew colder and colder, and we feared Jennings had given us the slip for good and all. Five months had elapsed since the last time he had been seen or heard of, and we had given up the job as hopeless, when the superintendent sent for me, and gave me the above information.

'Yes,' said my superior, rubbing his hands together as was his way when he was thoughtful, 'we have got a clue to him at last. But he is a long way off—out of our reach, perhaps. He is in America.'

This did not surprise me in the least. The number of rogues that I have had, professionally, to hunt down, and who were on their way to America, or starting to go to America, or making up their minds to go to America, would astonish you. Why, when you hear of a runaway criminal, the first thing that comes into our heads is Liverpool and the line of packets.

'Banks,' went on the superintendent, 'I intend to send you after him. But I doubt very much whether you will be able to track him out, much less to bring him and the property back to England with you.'

'I've very little fear about the matter, sir, if I can but come up with him,' I answered cheerfully enough; for, you see, during the seven years I had been in my present department of the force, I had been on similar errands

three times—twice to America, and once to France, and had been successful on all occasions. Not that I am a bit more expert than my comrades, nor perhaps equal to some that I could name, but that an offender can generally be traced out, if a man will but give his whole heart to the work.

'Yes,' said the superintendent; 'but I need not tell you that this Jennings is a slippery customer, and too wide awake to fall into the errors of ordinary scoundrels. You won't find *him* drinking at the bar of a Bowery tavern, nor yet lodging at a water-side hotel in New York. You took your first man in New York that way, did you not, Banks?'

'Yes, sir,' I replied.

'And your second at Philadelphia, where you had an easy bargain of him. But this is a different matter. Jennings has gone South, Banks!'

'I am ready to follow him, sir,' said I. So, after some more necessary talk, the superintendent gave me the information that had come to the ears of government, and my instructions, and money to defray expenses, besides telling me where and how to draw for more, and handing me a warrant to apprehend the body of Caleb Jennings, properly signed by the Secretary of State. One more help was afforded me—a photographic portrait of the runaway, which had been procured with difficulty, and only a very little while before, from the artist who had taken his likeness, and who had kept a copy, as usual. Perhaps, if we had had that photograph to assist us half a year back, we might have circumvented him, for we heard afterwards that he had twice seen and spoken with our officers, who took him for somebody else.

'Well, good-luck to you, Banks,' said the superintendent at parting; 'and if you wanted, which I don't believe, any further inducement to do your best in forwarding this important capture, I am in a position to supply it. The

Commissioner especially selected you for this duty; adding, that in the event of success, you might expect your immediate promotion to be inspector. Now, good-bye, and don't fail to bring Jennings back with you.'

So I went. I did not disguise from myself, as I steamed pleasantly over to New York, that a difficult business lay before me. My two former trips across the Atlantic, although they had given me a sight of only two or three important northern cities, had taught me that America differed from England by long-chalks, and that there was still less likeness between North and South than between the Old Country and the New. I cannot pretend to much book-knowledge, though I improve my mind when I have a chance, but I had talked to Americans a good deal, and read many of their newspapers, and kept eyes and ears open; and I knew pretty well that, down South, the law was less respected than elsewhere, that duels and street-rows, and stabbings, and gougings, and shootings were only too plenty, and human life valued at a very low figure; and that shews the cunning of Jennings in taking his precious self and his ill-gotten cash down South, instead of staying, as all the uneducated scamps did, among the whisky-shops and fourth-rate boarding-houses of the seaports. *He* knew, Jennings did, how much tougher would be the work of any officer to ferret him out, and bring him back, if he were to put thousands of miles of rail and river, and unhealthy climates, and lawless places, betwixt him and the usual landing-place of passengers from England. Besides, in the slave states, where people's tempers are hot and peppery, the odds were fifty to one that a Britisher would never be suffered to make a caption. It would be resented as an insult to the states, and I should be likely to get a leaden pill administered to me by some native boon-companion of the forger. I did not lose heart when I thought over all this, but I determined I would be cautious, and not burn

my fingers if I could help it. I went from New York to Norfolk in Virginia, not that it was believed the man was there, for he had been heard of in Nashville, Tennessee, at a later date, but because it was best to track him regularly, and rake up every scrap of information against a rainy day. That is indeed a maxim of my profession, never to neglect trifles. Nothing *is* a trifle to those who have patience and wit to use it. I've known an old button, a torn envelope, a worn-out slipper serve to bring a rogue to justice when all else has failed.

From Norfolk, having picked up what little I could, I went off into Tennessee, to Nashville town. Well, Jennings *had* been there. Not under his own name: he was not such a greenhorn as that. At Norfolk he had been Mr Smith, and at Nashville he called himself Captain Williams. These changes of name would have thrown me clear off the scent but for the portrait. I shewed the photograph to a negro waiter at one of the principal hotels, and, says he: 'Dat Massa Cap. Williams.' This black remembered Williams, or rather Jennings, because he had won a lot of dollars at billiards, and chucked Pompey a five-dollar piece out of his winnings. But though I heard of his destination, and made out that he had gone west to Little Rock in Arkansas state, I was less lucky when I followed him there. I was six days in Little Rock before I could hear the least word of news about him; and, as I do not want to make myself out a cleverer person than I am, nor a more knowing one, I freely own that I found myself thoroughly out in my estimate of the difficulties of my search. You see, I had heard the Yankees were very inquisitive, never at rest till they had wormed out a stranger's business; and quite true, so they are; but they forget almost as quick as they learn, seeing they have no real interest in the matter, but just ask questions because it is their habit, and talk they must. So it came about, that when, in an American city or village,

I went high and low to trace out my shy customer, the work was like hunting for a needle in a haystack.

Often and often did I sigh to be in one of those nice little market-towns at home in England, where the dogs sleep all day on the pavement, and the tradesmen look at one another over the half-doors of their shops. Those are the places in which to inquire about a man in hiding. A stranger can't go into them without setting fifty tongues gossiping: housemaids cleaning door-steps, shop-boys and their masters, nurses, children, old ladies, boys and men lounging at corners, all remark the strange face. But in America, with all the curiosity of the people, so many thousand queer persons come and go, that they pass out of sight and out of memory at once; and especially is this the case in the West and South, and a pretty source of trouble it proved to me.

Six days I wasted in Little Rock, and then, after all, it was the stoker of a steam-boat from whom I gleaned fresh news. This man had come up from the river-side to see his sweetheart, and he reported Jennings to be living under his own name at Memphis in the Columbian Hotel. I suppose the rascal thought, after taking so many aliases, his own name was as safe as another for a bit. However, quick as I was in hurrying to Memphis, I found that Mr Jennings was gone; indeed, the landlord had forgotten his personal appearance, and could only say that he was tallish and dark, which he was; but as for his being the original of the portrait, that he couldn't say, nor could the waiters, though the bar-keeper was ready to swear to it. Off I went, right up the river to Cincinnati, in pursuit of that Mr Jennings. At Cincinnati, I lost him again, then saw his name accidentally in the books of a steam-boat office; went after him to Chicago, and then to Buffalo, and then to London, Canada West; and the end of my wild-goose chase was, that just as I felt secure of victory, I came up with this Mr

Jennings; but he was not *my* Jennings. He turned out to be a corn-dealer, an honest townsman of London, Canada West, two inches taller than the absconded cashier, and no more like him than I was. Here was a blow to my hopes. I was fairly at my wits' end. I had to draw for money too, and had nothing to shew for what I had spent but the fact of my having travelled over an immensity of land and water. I declare I could have cried with vexation as I turned from the corn-dealer's door. Nor was my sorrow, I do assure you, all selfish. Of course, I knew my reputation was at stake, and my promotion to an inspectorship too; but that was not all: we detectives have a real pride and pleasure in being, in a sense, the protectors and helpers of the honest part of the community, and I hate a rogue to get off scot-free—it does so encourage other rogues.

At New Orleans, I found a letter from the superintendent, bidding me keep a good heart, and never slacken my endeavours; for the joint-stock company that had been defrauded were most anxious and resolute to spend anything to effect the arrest of their treacherous servant. It was not merely out of revenge, nor yet for the nineteen thousand pounds, though that is a vast of money; but there were papers among those he had gone off with that had been merely deposited with the bank—title-deeds of estates, vouchers, and what not—and no cost was too great to get them back. The superintendent would send another officer to help me, if I chose. I didn't choose. After all this baffling and winding, thought I, I will run my fox to earth, if I grow gray in searching for him. If he's in America, I'll find him. Indeed, I tried very hard to do so. I spent months in the chase, and to recount all my wandering would be tedious. Here I got a clue, and I followed it for a time, and then it broke short off. And at another place I would get a fancied inkling of my man's whereabouts, and find out somebody who was evidently in hiding, and get within arm's-

length of the person, and find him a suspicious-eyed, slinking stranger. Bless you! Jennings was not the only rogue hiding himself in the South. And now New Orleans, which had been deserted ever since summer brought the yellow fever, began to be full to overflowing. I went there, now that the healthy cold wind—the norther, as they call it—had taken to blowing, and that people were crowding in for their winter's gaiety. I had a notion Jennings might be there; there were so many as bad as he, and worse, and I knew that New Orleans attracted all the scamps of the country; but though I believe I went into every bar and billiard-room and café and gambling-house in that profligate city, never a glimpse of Jennings could I get. He had been a wild fellow in England—on the sly, of course; for he was a finished hypocrite, and his masters had thought such a pious, modest, industrious young man didn't live as their model cashier. This was why I looked for him in the haunts of gay folks. But I did not see him, could not hear of him, and began to despair. I was at Vicksburg, on the Mississippi, by mere accident. I had been up to St Louis in consequence of quite false information, and, on my return from that idle errand, the boat had run aground two miles above Vicksburg. Nobody was the worse except for the delay, and we all had to sleep at that place as best we might. Knowing the tastes of Jennings, I always went to flash first-chop hotels, as the likeliest wherein to hear of him; but on this day I found the chief establishments crowded, and went to a decayed, second-rate hotel, kept by a snuffy old French creole. It was evening, and though the Americans called it cool, I found it warm enough to make it pleasant to sit by an open window in the big dining-saloon, where I could enjoy my brandy-cobbler and cigar in peace.

Most luckily, there was a big screen of stamped and gilded Spanish leather which cut my slice of the room off from the rest, and shut me up as completely as if I had been in a box

of one of our own old taverns in the City of London. I had got but half-way through my glass of delicious iced beverage —and why they are not as common at home I do not know —when in came two young men, and sat down at a distant table, and called for refreshments, which the black waiter brought them. I took a peep at them through a crack in the screen. I had never seen them before. By what they said, I guessed them to be overseers of plantations somewhere up the country; or one might have been an overseer, and the other a book-keeper. Believing themselves to be alone, they began to talk very freely. They talked of New Orleans, and gambling, and duels, and conquests over the fair sex, and the like profitable discourse, and then of negroes, crops, and cotton, till I nearly dropped asleep. And yet I listened. You see I made it my duty to listen, for, who knows! queer things do come out sometimes. At last one young fellow began to rally the other about his being 'smitten' with a certain Miss Linwood, the daughter of a planter, which the other laughingly denied. 'Kate Linwood is pretty enough,' said he; 'but if little Kitty cares for anybody, it's for Hervey Vaughan.'

'What! that naval fellow — second-lieutenant of the *Vesputius* frigate, ain't he?' yawned the other.

'Yes,' said the overseer. 'A good-looking chap enough, and no nonsense about him; but he'll find himself cut out when he returns from his cruise. Old Linwood swears his daughter shall take that new overseer of his, for better for worse, though the girl hates the skunk; and quite right too.'

'Is that the fellow,' asked the other, 'that Linwood hired when Bill Brown cut the place?'

'The identical individual,' was the answer. 'He's flush of the rhino, it seems, and has lent old Linwood no end of dollars on mortgage. A precious ass he must be, for the Lesmoines plantation is worn out, and every nigger worth a

cent has been sold at New Orleans. But perhaps the scamp did it to buy pretty Kate.'

'What's his name? A Canadian, ain't he?'

'He says his name's Duff, and he hails from Canada; but, to my mind, he has the cut of a Britisher born—a dark, slim chap, that shews his teeth, when he smiles, in the funniest way possible, just like a dog grinning.'

'By Jove,' thought I, 'that's my man!'

Of the importance of my recent discovery, I had very little doubt. To be sure, it might turn out to be moonshine, like the story of the Canada corn-dealer, who had led me such a dance through the north-west, but I felt pretty sure that this Duff, this rich overseer, was no other than the runaway cashier. And very sharp of Jennings too, very sharp and clever; to adopt a regular calling, and a calling so popular in the South as that of overseer, was a stroke of which a great many poor rogues would have been incapable. But to get a hold on his insolvent employer, marry the daughter of the house, and become a landholder in due time, allied to a respectable family—that was about the most prudent thing he could have done. How could he guess I should ever be sitting in the hotel at Vicksburg, listening to the talk of those two lads? It was by mere accident the boat grounded, by mere accident that the other houses were full, and yet see how it checkmated all his excellent precautions!

When the young men were gone, I slipped out, and made inquiries, in a guarded way, about the Lesmoines plantation and Mr Linwood. First, one couldn't tell me; then, another thought the estate was down-stream a hundred miles; next, I was roundly asked what I wanted to know for, and whether I was a tarnation thief of an abolition spy, wanting to steal away niggers. But I pretended I was travelling for a Manchester house, and had some book-debts to look up. I heard, at length, that Lesmoines property lay back a little distance from the river, hard by a town called Princeton,

which is built on the bank of the stream, just at the angle where three states meet. Those three states are Louisiana, Mississippi, and Arkansas. I daresay it pleased Jennings all the better on that account, increasing as it did the chances of escape.

I lost no time in going up to Princeton, and there I put up at a little boarding-house kept by a Swiss, and where foreigners mostly lodged. Hitherto I had been travelling in the printed calico line, but now I had to sing a different song. Having partly served my time as a locksmith and bellhanger, in my native place, years before I entered the force, I took up the trade again. I bought a basketful of tools at Vicksburg, second-hand, except one or two chisels, because it would never do to have everything brand new and bright, as if I were a sham smith. A little oil and charcoal-dust on my hands and clothes, and I really made up the character very fairly, though my old master would have stared to see me in a shabby suit of black, with a swallow-tailed coat, cut for evening wear, and a black stock, but that is American fashion. I gave myself out for an English workman seeking employment, and who had been a twelvemonth at New Orleans. To pass myself off for a Yankee I knew to be hopeless; in fact, I had tried it, and could not imitate the twang so as to impose upon those who were born to it. Besides, I was a deal too sturdy and round-faced, and not tall enough, for any one to imagine me a New Englander, much less a southern man. So I just took the character I have spoken of, and which secured me from suspicion. I was not silly enough to begin chattering, directly, about Lesmoines plantation and the affairs of its proprietor. But I heard Mr Linwood canvassed more than once in conversations I listened to, and the general opinion was, that he was a ruined man. But what I heard about Miss Katherine, his daughter, interested me a good deal. There were no two voices about her; every one said she was good and pretty,

and going to be sold to the new overseer, who had got such influence over her weak father; and folks swore it was a shame. She had been, as I understood, regularly engaged to Lieutenant Hervey Vaughan, of the United States navy; and he was absent in the full faith that she was true to him, and that when he came back a first-lieutenant, they should be married. But the poor young officer was likely to find the girl he loved the wife of another man; for Duff or Jennings could twist old Linwood round his finger. He had lent the planter money—a most unusual thing for an overseer to do—but people guessed he had got the cash by some speculation or gambling hazard. The land of Lesmoines was good, but mostly exhausted; there was plenty of virgin ground, that grew nothing but weeds and wild-cane, but there were no hands to break it up; and why? Because old Linwood, a self-indulgent, careless person, with a taste for cards and claret, had gradually sold off all his best slaves to pay debts of honour and pressing bills, and could hardly get on at all. In this reckless, ruinous course he had been encouraged by his last two overseers, who had lined their pockets with their share of the purchase-money, having been commissioned to manage the sale of the field-hands at New Orleans city. Everybody said that Duff was playing a still bolder game, since, by marrying his master's only child, he was sure to be owner of Lesmoines one day; and a vigorous owner might restore the property to its original value. All people agreed that Kate Linwood detested Duff, and loved the absent lieutenant, but that her father, who was a violent man, for all his easy ways about money, had terrified her into a reluctant consent.

It took me a fortnight, or more, to make out even this confirmation of the news I had picked up at Vicksburg; and sharp as my watch was, I never could get a glimpse of the designing overseer. He never came into town at all. He had friends in Princeton, or perhaps I should say associates,

who now and then rode out to Lesmoines; but for a month or more he had not been seen in the place. I could guess why. He had his suit to press and his influence to keep up. At last I heard that a day had been actually fixed for the wedding. Impatience is a poor quality in most vocations, but it is fatal to the usefulness of a police-officer. Still, I got impatient. I strolled to the boundary of Lesmoines estate twice over, and I was almost tempted to talk to the poor old negroes that were hoeing or rail-mending, but I luckily let them alone; I say luckily, because a Britisher, even a plain workman, cannot speak to a black field-hand without drawing on himself suspicion and ill-will. But just as I was getting weary of waiting, and ready to run some risk, chance stood my friend. Into the town came riding, on a tall bay horse, a dark, slim, well-looking chap, genteelly dressed, and wearing a Panama straw-hat for the sun. I was in the verandah of the boarding-house smoking, but directly I clapped eyes on the horseman, a sort of flutter ran through me, and I felt as nervous as a young girl when she sees her sweetheart coming towards the house in his Sunday clothes. Down I went into the garden, among the thick magnolia and coffee bushes, and peeped out through the branches that screened me nicely. The man rode close by the palings; I whipped out the photograph from the inner pocket where I kept it, opened the case, and compared the portrait with the rider. Yes, it was Duff, *alias* Jennings: I was sure it was; and yet he was so much browner and older-looking, I half doubted, and the Panama hat made a difference. I slipped out and followed. He rode about town, first to the saddler's for a whip-lash and to talk about a set of new girths; then to a general store to order matters for the negroes—Osnaburg cloth, bacon, and so forth; and next he went to the tailor's. Off he got, tied up his horse to one of the white wooden pillars of the piazza, and went in. I guess he was ordering his wedding-clothes. A fine time he was about it. At last he

came out, adjusting his gloves—he was a desperate dandy—and took hold of the reins of his horse, untied the knot in them, and leisurely mounted. As he did so, something tickled his fancy, and he smiled, a very peculiar dog-smile, that curled up his lips and shewed his teeth queerly. Often had I heard of that look in Jennings, and my heart leaped, for I knew then for certain he was the right man. He never observed me, but rode to a few more stores, and I lounged after him, with my hands in my pockets, and a careless saunter. It *was* a funny thing, the absconded cashier of the —— Bank riding like a lord through Princeton streets, and myself strolling after him, with my face as stupid as a young yokel's at a fair. By-and-by, I saw him riding up to the very boarding-house where I lodged, and I drew near too, and out came the landlord, and talked to him. The landlord spies me out, and holloes and beckons, and up I sauntered.

'Glad I've found you, Banks,' says the Swiss; 'you'd have lost a job else, for here's a gentleman inquiring for a locksmith.'

You must know there were only two locksmiths in town, a German and me. The German was a sad drunkard, in liquor half the week, and just then I knew he could not have held his head up, if the President had wanted him. I was therefore hardly surprised; but it being Jennings that required my services, I was more pleased than I chose to shew.

Jennings looked at me with a sort of superfine, haughty air. He had caught up the feeling of contempt with which 'mean whites' are regarded in the South. 'Ah, you're a locksmith, my man?' says he, cutting at the coffee-bushes with his long-lashed whip.

Now, if I had been passing for a Yankee, I'd have given my reply as saucily as the question was asked; but being known for an Englishman, I put up a fore-finger to my hat,

and answered: 'Yes, sir; can I do anything for you?' quite civil.

'You 're a Britisher, I calculate?' says Jennings, affecting to talk through his nose, and looking very keenly at me the while—he had his own reasons for mistrusting a countryman.

I answered the truth, I was a Briton, and I 'd come out to follow my trade, and was ready for a job.

So Jennings told me to come up that afternoon to Lesmoines, where there was plenty to do. There was a cellaret key to make, and doors and cupboards to look to, and the storeroom lock to file and oil, and a lot more. 'And,' says Jennings, as he wheeled his horse to ride off, 'I had nearly forgot: Miss Kate wants a new lock to her desk, or bureau, or something; so be sure you attend first to that. Always give ladies the preference!' And I quite hated him for the odious smirk on his face as he nodded and went away.

Be sure I went up to the house quite punctual, though the walk was long, and the sun hot enough to raise blisters on my face as I trudged along, for all it was the cold time of year. I chuckled to myself as I went, thinking how little Jennings knew who it was he 'd called in. But I had only come to the beginning of my task, and the battle was not won yet. To collar Jennings, and walk him off, may seem a simple operation enough, but in the South that 's a dangerous game. He had but to bawl for help, and call me an abolitionist, or talk about the hospitality of the states, and twenty rowdies would take up his quarrel. My work was not quite such plain sailing. As I went through the estate, I saw none but feeble old men and women, or quite raw boys and girls, at work; the fences were all to pieces, the cattle strayed where they liked, corn and cotton were choked with weeds, and the brushwood sprouted where it pleased. Everything was going to rack

and ruin, and the road had ruts in it to bury a wagon-wheel. But there was a creek of deep water from the river running up to very near the house, and a mouldering wharf where they used to ship the cotton. The house was a fine big one, Spanish style, with flat roof and shady verandahs, and a garden in better order than I expected. But the paint was peeled off, the wood was all cracked and warped with the sun, and half the windows had lost their glass panes. The hall-door was ajar, but when I knocked, out came an old crippled negro, and three or four barking spaniels. I was expected, for the old black man grinned, and let me in.

The house was almost as ramshackle and out of order inside as out—paint and paper all very old and ragged, and the furniture costly, but uncommonly old and moth-eaten. I saw old Mr Linwood in the room where I had the cellaret lock to take off—a portly, big-boned man of sixty, with a face I thought foolish, rather than bad or cruel. He was lounging in a rocking-chair, with a yellow silk handkerchief tied round his head. He bade me, with many oaths, be sure and make a good key, and be quick, for those darned nigger robbers drank his wine as fast as he opened it. He got very excited in telling me this, and then dropped back quite languid again. He was dressed in nankins, as many planters are thereabouts, and may have been a good-looking gentleman when younger, but he was none the handsomer for years of self-indulgence. There were pictures on the walls of the room—one of them I took for the deceased Mrs Linwood. Poor lady, it's no wonder her eyes had that sad look, with such a home and husband.

Presently, I was called by an old negress, who said Missy Kate was asking for me. In ascending the stairs, which were wide enough for a coach and six, with tremendous balustrades of solid Honduras mahogany, carved into grapes

and leaves, I got a peep out of a window, and saw a small house in a garden, with stable and paddock, and beyond it, a row of huts. Said I to the old grinning negress who was leading me, and who chattered and made faces like a great baboon, 'Who lives there?' And she answered, 'Massa busha live dar.' I guessed she meant the overseer when she said that; but I did not know then that 'busha' meant overseer in the language of the African-born blacks, till a gentleman told me so on the homeward passage. So that was Jennings's house. I found the young lady in a sort of morning-room, leading into her bedchamber, and where her books, and pictures of her own doing in water-colours, and other gimcracks were. I thought as she was shewing me the desk, the lock of which was injured, that I had seldom seen such a sweet pretty girl before as this planter's child. Very young, perhaps nineteen, perhaps less, with dark hair and blue eyes, like her mother's, and a delicate complexion, she was a gentle-eyed, modest darling, any father might have been proud of. But she had rather a scared look, and a dark circle under her eyes, as if she had been crying her little heart out. With all that, she did not look silly, nor yet a coward. I should say she gave in to her father out of duty, somehow, but she looked far from happy. The old negress lingered a long time, but at last, to my great joy, she went away. I lost no time; but still bending over the desk, with my screw-driver in my hand, I begged the young lady not to be frightened, to believe me to be a friend to her, and an enemy to the man who was persecuting her with his selfish love, and, in short, I told her the whole story—Duff's real name, and the whole state of the case.

She bore it very well; she didn't scream, nor yet flop down in a faint. At first, she was rather angry, thinking me an impertinent meddler, but presently she got quite interested. And when I finished, if she didn't take hold

of my broad grimy hand in her own pretty white one, and wanted to kiss it, and called me her preserver! I never was so ashamed in my life. 'Miss,' says I, 'I'm only doing my duty. But I do assure you that since I've heard this shameful story of the cheat put on your good father and yourself, and since I've had the pleasure of seeing you, I would take that Jennings, if all the scamps in Princeton were to help him. I'm not in the habit of making speeches, but that's the truth.' But the young lady, bless her kind heart, was wiser than me for the time, and would not hear of anything rash. So we cast about for a way of setting things square, I all the time pretending to be hard at work on the desk, and speaking low, for fear of some of the black servants, who are more inquisitive than white ones even, being within ear-shot. At last Miss Linwood exclaimed, with quite a light of joy on her face: 'I forgot; how stupid! Hervey can help us, now he is come back!' And then she blushed like a rose, for no doubt she thought I had never heard of Lieutenant Hervey Vaughan at all, but I quickly reassured her on that point. And right glad was I to hear that the *Vesputius* was lying in the roads, below New Orleans, and that Miss Kate had received a note from her lover that very morning.

After some consultation, we agreed that I should send a telegram to the lieutenant from Princeton, summoning him on special business connected with Miss Linwood's safety and happiness; and, to make sure of his believing me, I was to use a special phrase, no matter what it was now, which was a kind of freemasonry between the lovers. 'There would not be time for a letter,' said the poor girl, trembling as the thought crossed her, and I knew why. Thanks to old Linwood's violence and authority, the day for her hateful marriage with Jennings was fixed. Well, I finished my work about the house, to avert suspicion, and then away I went. In the avenue, I met Jennings on

horseback. He nodded to me, and I gave him as respectful a salute as I would to the Lord Mayor of London. I sent off the message the minute the office opened in the morning.

It was quite night before I got a return-message to say all was well, and Lieutenant Vaughan had leave of absence, and was on his way. Late in the afternoon of next day, he arrived, and luckily he had had the sense to bring a couple of sailors from the *Vesputius*, picked men, with him. He did not know what was the matter, but he knew southern ways, and that the help of two resolute fellows was valuable. A fine dashing fellow was the lieutenant, quite the gentleman, and as bold as a lion. We had a long talk—a council of war, he called it. He was too hot at first; I had to preach at him a long time, but Miss Kate's name was enough to make him prudent, and he let me settle matters. We sent up a note to let Miss Linwood know; the young gentleman wrote it, and I got a black boy to carry it, putting a key inside, to make-believe it was about locks. Then at eight in the evening we went up the creek to the wharf of Lesmoines, in a boat hired at Princeton, and rowed by the two man-of-war's men. We landed quietly, and the young officer—he was just made first-lieutenant—and I made our way to the overseer's house. There were lights burning. I knocked at the door; the lieutenant hid himself behind a tree. A half-naked negro-lad opened the door. I said I was come to speak to Mr Duff, and he ushered me in, the lieutenant following on tiptoe. In the parlour was Jennings, sitting at a table, on which were a bottle of spirits, a glass, a cigar-case, and a gun, for he had been shooting wild-ducks. I picked up the gun, took off the caps, and threw them away. He looked on, gasping with astonishment.

'Curse you, you scoundrel; you are drunk!' he cried.

I quietly pulled out my little staff with the brass crown,

and took him by the collar. 'Caleb Jennings,' says I, 'you are my prisoner, in the name of Her Majesty Queen Victoria. If you want to see the warrant, you can, but you'd best come quietly.'

He looked at me a moment, and then sprang up with a horrible curse, and pulled out a bowie-knife to stab me. But I wrestled with him, and Lieutenant Vaughan gave him such a blow on the wrist as sent the knife spinning across the room. In a second more, I had the handcuffs on his arms; snap! they went, with the most satisfactory sound I ever heard. His negro servants must have hated him, for they gave no alarm, though he bawled like a bull. We had to gag him, ay, and to tie his legs, and carry him, bound like a calf, to the boat. The sailors gave way with a will, and pulled down the creek. Just as we were rounding the point, a handkerchief waved, and a clear, sweet voice called to us. It was Miss Kate, on her pony, with the black boy who had saddled it standing near, and rolling his eyes at the spectacle of the overseer tied neck and heels at the bottom of the boat, and visible enough in the bright moonlight. Lieutenant Vaughan bade the sailors pull in to the bank, and he jumped ashore, and talked for a time to Miss Kate, all in whispers, and she bent her pretty head till her dark hair almost touched the young man's bronzed cheek—quite a picture to see. But Jennings writhed as if the sight tortured him. Miss Kate gave me her white hand as I stood up in the boat, and thanked and bade me good-bye very kindly. The lieutenant sprang on board again, and off we went, Miss Kate waving her handkerchief to the last. At Princeton, Lieutenant Vaughan proved worth a gold-mine. He got a warrant, and a states-marshal to execute it. Bless you, the judge and sheriff wouldn't have minded *me*, but a states-officer was different. He and his men helped to guard Jennings all the way to New Orleans, where I took berths on board an English

vessel bound homewards. We got home safe. Jennings was convicted at the Central Criminal Court, and got a long term of penal servitude; and quite right too. I became inspector; and only the other day a kind letter from Lieutenant Vaughan announced that he was married to Miss Kate, had left the navy, and that old Mr Linwood had given up the management of Lesmoines to the young couple. I hope they'll do well there.

MY LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

WE were quartered in Athlone. More than sixty years ago—and the date of my story goes so far back into the dim past—Athlone was one of the most agreeable stations in Ireland, or, indeed, in all the British possessions. Plenty of dancing, hunting, dining, flirtation, and miscellaneous amusement. The inhabitants, especially the younger and fairer members of the community, worshipped a red coat, and adored a pair of epaulettes. If they admired one thing more than infantry, that thing must have been cavalry; for Athlone is a horse-loving place, with a weakness for steeple-chases. We were infantry, but we had no reason to complain. The fiery Westerns had received His Majesty's Hundred-and-Ninth with the warmest and most brotherly hospitality. The young ladies had not been chary of their smiles. Our winter had been a blithe and pleasant one, and is still treasured up in my memory; and the summer, with its picnics and races, had not been far behind it. It was autumn when I asked our kind old colonel for a month's leave of absence. I had received an invitation to pay a long visit at a great country-house situated near Kells, the mansion of Miles Brackenbury, one of those ultra-

hospitable Irish squires long since extinguished by the Encumbered Estates Court. 'Come, my dear boy,' the letter said, 'and stay till you're tired of us, or till Easter; and sooner the last than the first. Cock-shooting is just begun; the woods are full of birds, and the house is full of company; you'll always find a nag at your service, when the Clashnaclachan hounds come within reach; and so no time for more, but *ceade mille failteagh!*' The good old man might have added to his list of attractions a cellar full of wonderful old claret, perhaps unpaid for, but sound and good, and the presence of half-a-dozen high-spirited daughters, the best waltzers and horsewomen in the county. Mr Brackenbury was not an old friend of mine or my family, as might be supposed by the familiar kindliness of his epistle. He had made our acquaintance at assizes, when his duty as a grand-juryman brought him to the town, and when he had dined repeatedly at our mess. Why he had taken a particular fancy to myself, then a raw subaltern not long emancipated from Sandhurst, I really cannot say. My own experience, however, leads me to fancy that an Irishman commonly bestows his friendship on an Englishman, in preference to one of his own countrymen. Now, it happened that—except the adjutant, the colonel, and the major—I was the only South Briton in the Hundred-and-Ninth. Most of our officers were natives of the Green Isle; and to my nationality, coupled as it was with a more than Irish love for field-sports, I believe I owed Mr Brackenbury's good-will. He invited me, at anyrate; the opportunity was too tempting to be neglected; and I easily obtained the colonel's consent.

'How are you going, Willoughby?' asked Douglas, the captain of our light company, as he stood smoking at the barrack-gate, among a knot of our fellows. 'How are you going? I shall drive the tandem to Mullingar to-morrow, and I'll give you a cast so far, if you like.'

'Hang it, Douglas, you promised to take *me*. Don't you remember, just before you revoked at whist last night?' cried Rogers of the grenadiers.

'But what's Willoughby about, poring over the map, as if he were a bailiff about to distrain on somebody?' asked some one else, calling attention to my studious attitude.

'I shall go a new way—a way of my own. I'm sick of gigs and tandems; and I know the face of every barmaid and beggar from this to Mullingar,' observed I.

'What does he mean by a new way?' 'A balloon?' 'A donkey and panniers?' suggested three of my brothers-in-arms.

'Sure,' said O'Shea, 'Willoughby's getting too wise and sober to go rattling about in gigs like the rest of us; he'll order out a "yellow," and a pair of spavined bays, and do the thing genteel.'

'You're out, O'Shea, for once,' said I, laughing, 'for I mean to walk.'

'To walk!' repeated all the officers present, in a tone of amazement that could not have been more genuine had I proposed to fly.

Pedestrian tours, in truth, were unknown things in my young days; nobody dreamed of trudging who could afford to ride. But when I convinced them that I really meant what I said—that I wanted to see a new and wild part of the country, and to get, perhaps, a little snipe-shooting on my way, there was a chorus of expostulation. 'Strike out a path for yourself across the Bog of Allen? Why, man, 'tis in Swift's Hospital you ought to be, with a head shaved as smooth as a billiard-ball.' 'You'll catch the ague!' 'Or be smothered in a quagmire!' 'Or tumble in among the Whiteboys. I heard Captain Rock and his rapparee rascals had been at the old work near the Curragh last week.' But I was resolute, perhaps I ought to say obstinate. A very young man is so jealous of his new independence,

that he cannot endure to take advice. Besides, I really felt a wish for the walk. Twice, when on a 'still-hunting' expedition, I had obtained a glimpse of the half-explored recesses of the huge Bog of Allen, and I had some curiosity to see more. I was in high health and spirits; a capital walker in pursuit of game; and I enjoyed the idea of performing the distance in a very short time, and of gaining some credit by the feat. Accordingly, I sent on my portmanteau by coach, placed a few necessaries in a game-pouch, filled my shooting-belt with No. 10 shot, and my flask with Dartford powder, and made my servant clean my Joe Manton, till stock, lock, and barrel were as clean as a new sixpence. Then I started, with my sporting accoutrements buckled on, and my double-barrelled gun over my shoulder. Moore, O'Shea, and M'Vitie the doctor, walked with me to the second milestone, where I was to quit the road, and strike off across the country. They were all three good-natured fellows; and seeing that I could not be bantered or frightened out of my pet project, they were anxious to give me advice as to how I might best escape any dangerous adventure. Indeed, the Ireland of more than sixty years back is removed by what might appear a century of progress from the Ireland of to-day. The ashes of the rebellious spirit of '98 still smouldered, and ever and anon blazed up into fitful flame. The people were miserably poor, ignorant, and discontented. Religious disabilities had not yet been done away with; and Orange injustice was bitterly avenged by midnight burnings and assassination. The mountains and bogs were full, not only of Rockites and Whiteboys, but of illicit distillers, between whom and the troops that hunted them there was the deepest animosity. My brother-officers spoke truly and sensibly when they assured me that it was not safe for one who wore the king's colours to trust himself alone in the midst of the lawless peasantry. But at nineteen years of age, we are not apt to accept a warning; so on I

went, laughing and chatting, till we got to the second milestone.

'A wilfu' man maun hae his way,' said the doctor, taking snuff, and eyeing me as ruefully as if I had been on the verge of destruction.

'Don't sleep in any blackguard little shebeen, I advise you,' said Moore, who was a senior lieutenant and a steady fellow; 'and be sure you avoid giving the people any pretext for a quarrel. Don't be caught napping; and mind you have the gun in good order, in case of the worst.'

'And, Charley, if they make an end of you among the bogs, be sure you tell them you belong to the Hundred-and Ninth: it would be a satisfaction to the regiment to bury you decently,' observed O'Shea, an inveterate joker.

'Hark ye, Willoughby, ye daft callant,' said the doctor, who spoke much broader Doric than his modern representatives from Edinburgh or Aberdeen; 'we would no be pleased to hear that you 'd been coupit into a peat-hole, nor yet had your throat cut from ear to ear, among these wild Irishers. So be canny and quiet, my lad, and dinna speak any nonsensical compliments or daffing to the lasses, and keep out o' mischief and arguments, and push on to sleep at Barrynaclish, where there 's a very decent inn, to be in Ireland.'

'Mind you keep a bright look-out for Captain Rooney, the highwayman,' said Moore; 'and don't be squabbling with that Mr Connell, that you cleaned out so prettily at the mess last week, in case you meet him at Mr Brackenbury's table. He was a close chap, but he dropped a hint that he lived near Kells when he was at home.'

'He gave Willoughby a look as black as thunder when he got up from the table,' said O'Shea, laughing. 'There 'll be a fine piece of work if they come together again. I never saw a fellow come for wool, and go back so completely shorn. But, Charley, the saints, as my grandfather used to

say, be with you, if you meet Red Peter and his gang, and'——

'Confound Red Peter and his gang,' cried I gaily, as I shook hands with the honest trio; 'good-bye, good-bye, old fellows. We shall meet at Mullingar, for old Brackenbury and his family always go over to the ball on the 27th; and I engage to supply the mess with woodcocks.'

I turned back twice, to wave my hand to the little group still standing beside the second milestone; then I got over a turf-wall, scrambled as best I could through some excessively soft and treacherous swamps, and lost sight of my friends. I walked rapidly, and within two hours had made considerable progress. The Bog of Allen, even now, when its long-neglected wastes have turned out very gold-mines with respect to paraffine candles and peat-charcoal, is a strange russet region of brown turf and stagnant water. But in the day of which I speak, before modern agriculture and drainage commissions were known, and when no one dreamed that clear oil and pure white candles could be conjured out of the black bog-earth, the vast quagmire presented an aspect of the sternest desolation. Still the day was fine, the weather dry for Ireland, and I strode along with a light heart and active limbs, unsaddened by the gloomy sterility of the treeless landscape. Everywhere the same turf-stacks, the same dikes intersecting the fields, where a few lean cattle and shaggy horses pastured; the same sullen pools of water, stained purple, crimson, or inky black, by the peat that bordered it. Now and then, I flushed and shot a snipe; sometimes the big black Irish hares, looking gigantic in my English eyes, would start up under my very feet, and scud away like shadows across the bog.

Sometimes I nearly stumbled over a cluster of wretched cabins, which I had taken for turf-stacks, and which hardly seemed habitable by human occupants, until a swarm of barefooted children ran out, setting up a wild clamour in the

Erse language at the sight of a Sassenach gentleman. But I encountered no labouring-men or travellers, though at a considerable distance I could occasionally see a few turf-cutters plying their spades among the quagmires. The track I was following was a broad one, practicable enough at that season of the year, but which would have been impassable after heavy rains. It ran through a very wet and unfrequented part of the morasses, and by following it, I was able to cut off a considerable angle, and to shorten the distance by several miles. Up to the present time I had known my way pretty fairly, having pushed thus far into the bog when accompanying, in the execution of a common but unpleasant duty, a party of soldiers detailed for 'still-hunting.' But there was a wide difference between traversing the district at night, under the guidance of excise-officers familiar with its features, and making my own way across it by the help of recollections; therefore, when I came, towards two o'clock in the afternoon, to a place where several roads and paths, each more rugged and execrable than the other, united in front of a little hamlet, I was fairly at fault. I met two or three wretched-looking women, staggering home under the weight of the ponderous turf-creels which their husbands had filled; from them I inquired my way, but they were, or pretended to be, wholly ignorant of English. They shook their heads, and curtly answered in Irish that they 'had no Saxon.' But my eye suddenly lit upon a cabin superior in comfort and size to the other huts, and which was evidently a whisky-shop or shebeen. Not only did a withered branch overhang the door, but a half-effaced inscription, the work of some Athlone house-painter, set forth that 'Bridget M'Carthy' had some connection with 'spirits' and 'tobacco.' A good-humoured country-girl, not in the least pretty, but with a pleasant expression in her freckled face, was busy with her spinning-wheel at the door. She gave a jump of surprise as she espied me, rose and courtesied half timidly.

'Did my honour plase to want anything?' The words were English at anyrate, and they were welcome to my ear. I forthwith mentioned my desire to learn the shortest way to the place where I was to spend the night, and I also asked for refreshments. Was there any ale? The girl shook her head.

'Mother,' she said, 'had nothing but just the groceries, barrin' praties and bacon.' I declined the latter, for I had been thoughtful enough to bring with me some sandwiches in a case, but I had no objection to some whisky and water.

'Mother!' screamed the girl, 'a gentleman at the door!'

From the interior of the cottage forthwith appeared a tall bony woman, whose long dark hair, dashed with gray, flowed over her shoulders like the mane of a wild-horse. I daresay Mrs Bridget M'Carthy had been a fine woman in her youth, somewhat in the Lady Macbeth style, but now she was grim enough to have been one of the Furies in person. She wore a man's frieze coat over her feminine attire, and was as rough and fierce as her daughter was neat and gentle.

'Who's this?' she asked of her daughter, after casting a suspicious glance at me.

'A strange gentleman, wanting to be tould the way to Barrynaclish,' said the girl; 'and he'd like to take some dhrink, mother; but sure I couldn't ask him in.'

These last words were spoken in a whisper. The elder female impatiently shrugged up her shoulders, and said something in Irish, on which the girl vanished into the house.

'You're a sodger officer?' said the hostess abruptly, fixing her piercing black eyes first on my cap, and then on my face. I then remembered that I wore a forage-cap, the only part of my equipment which could have betrayed the military man, but I felt some uneasiness at the woman's remark.

'A good guess, mistress,' said I, as carelessly as I could;

'and now, if you will give me a drop of poteen, and point out the road to Barrynaclish'——

'What shall I earn for my pains?' cried the landlady with startling fierceness. 'Is it more blood you'd have? And do you dare to ask me the way to the place where your red-coated butchers—— Bad end to ye, and all the rest of the inimies of the poor!'

'More blood!' Was the woman sober? Yes, her fiery eye was quite steady as it glared upon me. Her voice quivered with the agitation of strong hate, not of intoxication. But before I could speak, the daughter came tripping out of the house, bearing in her hand an *egg-shell* filled with pure whisky—no uncommon substitute for a wine-glass in such out-of-the-way places.

'Would my honour take a taste of the dew, nate? Sure, she had set the kettle on, but the wather would take a few minits to hate before 'twas fit for the punch.'

The daughter was as smiling and civil as the mother was the reverse. I had not the heart to refuse the primitive goblet she proffered me; I drank the whisky at a draught. It was excellent.

'Good stuff this; too good to be "Parliament,"' said I with a laugh. Now, in general, you can pay no greater compliment than this to a shebeen-keeper; but my praise of the liquor merely made Mrs M'Carthy stretch out her long arm, and mutter something in Irish, which sounded very unlike a blessing.

'Hush, mother, hush!' cried the girl; 'whisht, then. Would you plase to sit down, sir?'—and she offered me the chair that stood beside the spinning-wheel. 'Mother's not quite herself to-day, sir, by rayson of there bein' a corpse in the house. Sure, alannah, the young gentleman had no share in it!' For the fierce hostess was again grinding out curses between her teeth.

'Indeed,' said I, 'you do me no more than justice. I

guess, from what you say, that some one has lost his life in some unfortunate collision with the troops. I hear of it now for the first time.' Then I remembered that a detachment of the Hundred-and-Ninth, under Captain Cameron, had been for some time stationed at Barrynaclish, for the purpose of suppressing illicit distillation. It turned out that on the preceding night a skirmish had taken place between a party of ours and some outlawed smugglers, and that a man had been shot dead on the spot.

'"Twas a poor boy from Kerry, sir, and he had no kinsfolk within miles and miles,' said the girl sadly; 'so they brought him here for the wake and the burial, and the coroner comes to-morrow. My heart bleeds for the poor mother, fur off to the south, that doesn't dream yet that she 'll never see her son more.'

I expressed my regret for the unhappy occurrence, and Mrs M'Carthy became so far mollified as to discontinue her anathemas. I informed the hostess and her daughter that I was not going to join the detachment at Barrynaclish, but to pay a visit at a considerable distance off; and under existing circumstances I declined to await the boiling of the kettle, and presented Mary with half-a-crown in payment for her whisky. A couple more half-crowns, judiciously bestowed for the wake, propitiated Mrs Bridget so far as to turn her curses into blessings. 'And now, my dear,' said I to the handmaiden, 'I shall be obliged to you for directions as to my way.'

Mary's instructions were explicit enough. I was to turn to the left as far as the burned cabin, and then to the right, and so by the meadows and the big pool, and if I kept straight on towards the mill I should see against the sky, I should reach the fine carriage-road itself. 'But be sure, sir, you tread carefully in crossing the bog, for 'tis dangerous walking. And when ye git to the hard road, then, be sure, sir, ye beware of the captain.'

The captain! what captain? But the girl gave me a frightened look, laid her finger on her lips so rapidly that the gesture passed unseen by her gaunt parent, and dropped me a farewell courtesy. It was certain that she had intended to give me a friendly warning, and as certain that I could not divine her meaning. I thought of it as I trudged along the track she had indicated, past the burned cabin, and straight on for the distant mill. But I had soon plenty of occupation for my faculties in crossing a treacherous bog, which required to be traversed with extreme precaution. I got well over the trembling surface at last, and before very long I came on a broad road, much neglected, but still practicable for wheel-carriages. My thoughts now took a wider range. I remembered the purport of my solitary journey, and the comments and advice of my brother-officers. I thought, too, of the half-jocular recommendation I had received, not to be led into a quarrel with our late guest, Mr Connell, should we meet at Mr Brackenbury's hospitable board. And now I may as well explain what my friends meant by remarking that I had 'cleaned out' the pockets of the gentleman in question. I had not won a sixpence from him at cards or dice; there had been no gambling at all, in the common sense of the word. But the Irish gentlemen of that day were addicted to an amusement called 'challenging,' in which two persons exchanged, or offered to exchange, some articles of property, an arbitrator being selected to award the precise money premium to be paid in either case. Military messes were not slow to adopt this custom, always provocative of a great deal of mirth and diversion, and the Hundred-and-Ninth had caught the epidemic. Skill and luck combined curiously to render such exchanges uneven, and I have known ill-starred aspirants lose all their personal property, down to the clothes they wore, and for the loan of which they were indebted to an opponent's forbearance. So had it fared with

this Mr Connell, a man whose acquaintance some of us had formed casually on a race-course, and who had repeatedly dined with the regiment. He was a dark, saturnine, middle-aged man, of no slight tact and worldly knowledge, but he had been signally worsted in an attempt to pigeon myself, whom, as one of the junior officers and an Englishman, he had deemed an easy prey. To be sure, though I won his gig, his bay mare, and his brown horse, his watch, pistols, driving-cloak, and diamond breast-pin, I had been an indulgent conqueror; I had allowed him to ransom the whole spoil on easy terms, and had been playfully rebuked by our own fellows for letting him off so cheaply. But this clemency had not taken away the smart of defeat; the young officers of the corps had quizzed the beaten man most mercilessly; and it was with looks that boded little friendship that Connell had given me a cold shake of the hand, muttering something about 'having his revenge at another time.'

'On my conscience, Willoughby,' O'Shea had said, 'when that fellow said he'd have his "revenge," he looked mightily as if he meant it. 'Tis pistols and coffee he'll be inviting you to yet, old boy.' But I had nearly forgotten Connell and his black looks, until I remembered him as I turned into the road and gave an involuntary chuckle as the scene of his defeat arose again before me. The sun was getting low, and a mist already lay, like a soft white sheet of gossamer, over the brown morasses on my left. There were no milestones to be seen, and I could only guess my distance from the village. A frieze-coated peasant whom I met leading a calf in a string, told me that Barrynaclish was two miles off, 'or maybe a thrifle more.' Irish miles are long, but the 'thrifle' proved longer still; the twilight fell and deepened, and yet I saw no signs of the white-washed houses and squalid hovels of Barrynaclish. The bitterns were booming in the swamps to the west and north;

I heard their harsh cry, but no other sound. What was that? The tramp of a horse! No very remarkable phenomenon on an ordinary road, but in this lonely region it acquired a new character. The beat was quick and heavy; the steed was evidently trotting at that brisk pace which was the boast of the old Irish breed. Presently a man in a huge many-caped coat, with a broad-brimmed hat slouched over his brows, and mounted on a powerful horse, came thundering past, and reined up his foam-flecked steed a few yards in front of me.

'Good-evening, sir,' said the stranger, in a hoarse voice that struck me as being an assumed and unnatural one; 'can you tell me the distance to Barrynaclish?' I moved on a pace or two, with my gun thrown into the hollow of my arm. I hardly relished the newcomer's looks and tones. The country was still in a disturbed state, and, independent of agrarian outrages, Captain Rooney, as he was called, gave almost as much annoyance to those who had anything to lose, as his more famous predecessor on the highway, 'Captain' Freeney. 'Can you tell me the distance?' asked the man impatiently.

'About a mile, I should say; nothing to a stout nag like yours,' I replied, rather coldly. The man gave a laugh.

'You are a stranger to these parts,' said he, 'and so am I. I'm going north from Kildare market. We can push on to the village together, and then we shall be the better able to keep off highwaymen.'

'Much obliged for the offer, sir,' I returned, more and more doubtful of the intentions of my new acquaintance; 'but I am on foot, you on horseback. We must go on at our own pace, as before.'

'Nay, I was always of a companionable nature,' said the horseman, good-humouredly, as he swung himself out of his saddle, and prepared to lead his nag by the bridle; 'and would rather walk and talk than ride in silence.'

I was puzzled, but there was an appearance of hearty frankness in the horseman's speech and action which in a manner debarred me from giving him an unfriendly answer; so we walked along for some distance, the stranger leading his horse, a fine animal, dark brown, with one white foot. I kept my right hand on the lock of the gun, which I carried across my left arm, and watched the traveller narrowly, but he shewed no sign of distrust or hostile design.

'Are you from the south, if I may make bold to inquire?' asked my fellow-wayfarer.

'No,' I replied; 'I'm from the west. It's Athlone we're quart'—— Here I stopped short, inwardly chiding my imprudence, for I had been about to reveal my true character, and, for aught I know, the stranger might be a chief of the Ribbonmen or Rockites. The man gave a start, and looked hard at me. His face was as much concealed by the slouched hat, cape, and a handkerchief he wore round his neck, as if he had been masked, but I saw his eyes sparkle through the dusk.

'Ah! an officer, then; on leave, I daresay? Do you belong to the dragoons, or the Hundred-and-Ninth, *captain?*' Every military man in Ireland is called captain, by a large majority of the population, and to a subaltern, particularly a junior ensign, there is something winning in the sound of such a title.

'The Hundred-and-Ninth,' answered I, trying to catch a glimpse of his features. 'We have met before, I daresay; I seem to remember your voice.'

'Sure, so do I yours,' responded the man dryly. 'Mr Willoughby, if I don't mistake?'

'At your service,' said I; 'and your name'—— Crash! The question on my lips was cut short by a sudden and fierce blow with the butt-end of the ruffian's loaded whip, which fell like lightning on my unguarded head. I staggered

under the cowardly stroke, the blood trickling from my temples, and a thousand fiery sparks dancing before my eyes, but I did not fall. Almost mechanically, I lifted my gun, and brought the stock to my shoulder. Ere I could cock it, however, the muffled horseman sprang upon me with a savage imprecation, grappled me by the throat and collar, and we both came headlong to the earth. There was a desperate struggle; we were on our feet again, and locked in furious encounter: my nerves and muscles seemed to brace themselves for the contest, in spite of the treacherous blow I had received. The robber, for I at once guessed the truth—that I had to deal with the notorious Captain Rooney—was a far stronger man than myself, and possessed the firm muscles which only belong to robust persons whose lives have been passed in the open air, and nothing but my west of England skill in wrestling kept up the uneven strife. The highwayman's horse, the bridle dangling from his neck, stood by, snorting and pawing the ground.

'Bad cess to ye!' panted Rooney, as he wound his sinewy arms round me, and put forth all his powers for my defeat; ''twill be wise of you to knock under at once. I've grudge enough against you already.'

We reeled towards the bank; the robber's hat fell off, and the newly risen moon threw her light on his swarthy features, distorted by rage and excitement. 'Mr Connell!' The words broke from me half unconsciously. Yes, it was our guest at mess, the sporting gentleman who had been worsted in his effort to pigeon the raw ensign. My surprise was fatal; for a moment I stood unnerved, on the next I was lying in the road, my enemy's knee on my chest, his hand on my throat, and the pistol-barrel glimmering before my eyes.

'Ye know me, do ye? I'll stop your mouth onst and for all,' growled the villain, as he gasped for breath. There was a dreadful pause, only broken by the click of the lock. I

looked up, and saw the deadly weapon pointed full at my forehead. There was no hope. 'I swore I'd have my revenge. I tould ye, I'd meet ye again,' said Rooney, or Connell, whose voice was thick with fury, while his tone and language were those of a rough untutored rogue, and all his outer husk of gentility had deserted him—'and met we have. The gay redcoats laughed, did they, when you won my property from me! I'll tache one of them to laugh another way. Take that!' I closed my eyes, and breathed a silent prayer for Heaven's mercy, as I felt the cold muzzle of the pistol pressed between my eyes. But I scorned to utter a word of entreaty to the assassin. The horse whinnied, and scratched the ground with his forefoot. The robber started.

'Some one coming, eh! *diaoul!* they shall find your skull emptier than nature made it, for brains.' And with this brutal taunt he pulled the trigger. The pistol missed fire. I made a violent effort to rise, calling loudly for help.

'Howld your prate, fool!' growled the highwayman. 'You won't? Then here's to insure your silence.' And he dealt me a couple of strokes across the head with the butt-end of his weighty horse-pistol, and my senses left me.

When I recovered enough to open my eyes, the moon was riding high among a fleecy pack of white clouds; the dusty road was in the full track of the moonshine, while the morass beyond, full of peat-bogs and mouldering piles of turf, was in deep shadow. I was quite alone. My limbs were stiff, and my blood was chilled with the night-dews. As for my head, it ached with a dull pain almost insupportable, and a shivering as of ague ran through my frame. My brains were still confused, but mechanically I put my hand to my aching head, and was surprised to find that my hair was wet and matted with a dark fluid—the blood that had oozed from three wounds inflicted by my late assailant. In a kind of stupid surprise, I looked at my gory fingers, and marvelled at the plight in which I found myself. Slowly did memory

return, shewing me, as in a dream, the recent struggle and my narrow escape with life. Of the robber and his horse, no trace remained. My pockets, I found, had been thoroughly emptied and turned inside out. My watch and money were of course gone, and so were some other trinkets, even to my gold sleeve-buttons; but a valuable ring which I wore, and which was dear to me for the sake of the giver, had escaped the eye of the plunderer, who had probably done his work rapidly, in fear of the arrival of those at whom his horse had taken alarm. Had he left me for dead? Most likely that was the case. But how cold it was, and how my poor head throbbed, while the wounds smarted in the frosty air. I should be dead enough in real earnest before morning. Summoning all my energies, I strove to rise, and by a great exertion reared myself on my elbow. It was nearly dark, the moon was on the verge of the sky, the white clouds looked gray and dim. I was very cold and trembling, but my heart was beating fast, as if fighting against approaching death. I heard voices close to me.

'"Twas hereabouts the gossoon saw the horse, Mike.'

'Stuff, I tell ye. Some farmer going home on his ould garron of a nag. And if there *was* thruth in the boy's discoorse, sure, 'tis nothing to us.'

'Holy Moses! there lies the man that was robbed, dead as Brian Boroihme himself.'

I looked up through my heavy half-shut eyes. Five men, loaded with kegs, were contemplating me by the shaded light of a lantern. They were dressed in the common frieze-coats and brimless hats worn by the peasantry, but there was something wild and savage in their air; two of them were barefoot, and all had haybands twisted round their legs, as a rude substitute for stockings.

'The captain's made clean work of it this time,' said one of them sententiously.

'It's a son of old Trench of Glasnamara,' asserted another.

'Tush!' cried a third; 'he's no more a Trench nor myself. 'Tis a sodger officer. Sarve him right, say I, and I wish the captain would rid Ireland of the breed of them.'

'Bathershins!' exclaimed the most good-natured ruffian of the group, dropping on his knees at my side; 'I believe he's only kilt, not dead at all. Shew a light, boys. His eyes are open.'

'What's to be done, now?' asked another.

'Lave him where he lies: the could frost will finish him before mornin',' observed one philanthropist.

'Mike's right: the curse of Cromwell on all redcoats,' chimed in another.

I tried to speak; my tongue refused obedience; I could not utter a word. But the man who knelt beside me sprang abruptly up and spoke with great energy, at first in Irish, then in English. The Erse was unintelligible to me, but the English was not wanting in a sort of eloquence.

'See now, boys, sure as the blessed moon's yonder in the sky, 'tis enough to bring a curse on the lot of us. Sarve us right if every sup of whisky were spoilt in the still, or taken by the thieving gaugers. Look at the poor young gentleman, lyin' there before you, helpless and bloody, and you to be lavin' him to perish—a Christian man'——

'He's no Christian, Tim. I'll warrant him a Prothestant, and an Englisher too,' remonstrated one of the hearers.

'What o' that, Jem? Sure, ould Miles Brackenbury's a Prothestant too, and has he not stood our friend many a time when we were in throuble, and the Orangemen would have shipped us off for iver to hunt kangaroos! Shame on ye! A butcher would have more heart for a hurt lamb than you for a fellow-cratur.'

I think the discussion was prolonged, but I heard only an indistinct gabble of words before I again grew faint. When I recovered consciousness, I was wrapped in a frieze-coat, and being borne along by four active men over a wild part of the country. Tim, my preserver, walked beside me, and seemed to watch over my helpless condition with some degree of attention.

'Stop a minit, boys; the young gentleman's coming to himself. Take a dhrop, captain; 'tis the finest thing in the world agin the faintness.' And he put to my lips a flask of coarse green glass, containing pure whisky, which had never paid toll to the royal revenue. I took a moderate pull at the contents, and certainly felt the better for the artificial glow thus imparted. Off we went again. It was wonderful to observe with what a light, easy tread, with what swiftness and sureness of foot, those hardy outlaws carried me over the most dangerous ground. The path lay across immense morasses, where the earth quaked beneath every footstep, where it was necessary to spring from island to island of firm soil in the middle of a miniature ocean of weedy slough. On either hand lay quagmires and slimy pits of unknown depth; and deep pools of dark water, or peat-coloured streams, had constantly to be skirted. But the smugglers picked their way with infinite skill, and marched on until, from behind a ruinous wall of turf, the hail of a wild sentinel checked them.

'Stand, or I 'll shoot ye.'

'Friends.'

'Kape off, nabocklish: we're not to be caught napping. Give the word, can't ye?'

'Vinegar Hill! Will that contint ye?' asked Tim.

'Whoop! ye're welcome,' answered the frieze-clad sentry, shewing his rags, his shaggy head, and his rusty gun, over the crumbling wall. 'Red Pether's come back, and a blessed temper he's in. What have ye got there?'

'A poor young chap, hurt by that divel Rooney,' said Tim, as we passed on.

'And my back 's nigh broken with carryin' him, let alone the kegs,' cried one of the other men, and the rest of the thoughtless fellows broke into a hearty laugh. A wild scene the camp afforded. There were no tents, but a score of wigwams roughly built of sticks and turf, and very inferior to the 'lodges' which beavers construct. Thirty fires were burning with the rich crimson glow peculiar to incandescent peat, and each had its still of pewter or copper, glinting in the ruddy light, and watched by some old man or crone with dishevelled gray hair and tattered cloak. A brighter fire of peat, mixed with brushwood, burned in the midst, and before it was slowly roasting a stolen sheep, cut into quarters, and ingeniously suspended by haybands from a structure of sticks. This fire and the cookery seemed under the charge of three or four half-clad boys and girls, presided over by a witchlike old woman in a tattered red cloak, who brandished a long iron ladle in the operation of basting. The ground was covered with sacks of grain, piles of potatoes, barrels, bottles, pack-saddles, and ready-cut peats for fuel. Nine or ten men, in frieze or dilapidated broadcloth, lay dozing among the heaps of turf, and several women were conversing in low tones within the wigwams. The whole encampment realised a perfect picture of savage life. Our appearance created a sensation. Not only the roast meat, but even the stills were left to take care of themselves, while men, women, and children crowded up to stare at me, and to ask clamorous questions of my escort.

'Where 's Red Pether?' asked Tim, when the curiosity of the crowd was somewhat appeased.

'Sure he 's in his cabin, yonder,' said an old woman, pointing to the largest hut; 'and what he 'll say when he sees the officer, the saints know best!' And the speaker crossed herself, and shook her wrinkled head ominously.

Red Peter! I began to remember the name. It was against this man, famous in the annals of illicit distillation, that my brother-officers had warned me. In a moment more, the redoubtable Peter appeared. He was very tall and gaunt, with a pale face, scarred with cicatrices that added much to his ugliness; and his red hair, hanging in a fiery mop almost to his shoulders, proved his right to the appellation he enjoyed. This captain of smugglers was dressed in an old green coat with the gilt buttons of some defunct Hunt, perhaps a trophy taken in war: the rest of his costume was of fustian and corduroy, somewhat less patched and torn than the apparel of his followers. He had pistols in the hayband that encircled his waist, and carried a fowling-piece in his hand. A long and vehement discussion ensued, partly in Irish, on my fate. Tim, as before, was my advocate; Red Peter was decidedly in favour of putting me to death as a member of the noxious race of redcoats. The audience swayed to and fro, siding with each orator in turn; but at last Red Peter stamped his foot, exclaiming: 'Arrah! stand aside; put the cratur down on the turf. 'Tis but the crookin' of a finger, and I'll have revenge for the Kerry boy, poor Sullivan, the red butchers murdhered yesterday.' Down I went on a pile of peat. Red Peter cocked his gun, and even Tim drew back, though still protesting loudly against the cruelty of such an act; when forth from the principal hut came two women, one tall and swarthy, the other comely and light-complexioned, and the latter ran forward with a cry, and caught Red Peter by the arm.

'Shame, father, father; don't black yer sowl by such a wicked thing. Sure, the poor young man's innocent of the blood spilled last night. He's from Athlone; he called at the house to-day, to ask his way, and very civil he spoke too.'

It was Mary M'Carthy, the daughter of the shebeen-

keeper, who had thus come forward in the nick of time, and her terrible mother following, corroborated her daughter's assurance, though in a grudging and sulky fashion. Even in that extremity of mortal peril, I could not help smiling as the strange idea suggested itself that here was I, like a new Captain Smith among the savages, saved from instant death by an Irish Pocahontas. 'I hope,' thought I, 'the resemblance will go no further. I trust that I shall not be compelled by the inexorable destinies to marry my fair preserver. If so'—— But my reflections were cut short by an almost unanimous and very noisy entreaty that Peter would lay down the gun. To this day, I have never felt sure whether the outlaw—who was not entirely sober—had blood-thirsty intentions, or merely meant to frighten me by a show of violence; at anyrate, he complied with the wish of the assembly, and permitted his wife (for his name turned out to be M'Carthy) to disarm him. In a few minutes the crowd that had gathered round me dispersed to return to their several avocations; and I was left to the nursing of Tim and of Mary M'Carthy, both of whom treated me with a gentleness surprising in beings so rudely nurtured. The hurts which the robber Rooney had inflicted were dressed and bandaged by one of the elder women, who had a wonderful repute for mending broken heads and curing flesh-wounds. One of the huts was assigned as my temporary abode; and during the week I spent among these wild people, I was attended to with a thoughtfulness and kindly good-feeling of which I cherish to this day a grateful recollection. Before Red Peter would suffer me to leave the camp, he exacted from me a solemn promise that I would never reveal its locality, a promise which I need scarcely say was never broken. Tim guided me by a series of intricate paths to the Kells road, and did not take his leave of me till I was within sight of habitations. Six hours afterwards, I was under the shelter of Mr

Brackenbury's friendly roof, and the strange scenes I had gone through appeared like the phantasies of nightmare.

I have little more to tell. Red Peter was tried at the Athlone assizes two years later, and was sentenced to transportation for life. In Van Diemen's Land, he made his escape, became a troublesome bushranger, and was finally murdered by his companions for the sake of the government reward for his head. Tim, a fellow too good for his trade, was placed at the bar a year before, and got off with a short imprisonment, in consequence of my testimony as to his having saved my life. He married his sweetheart, Mary M'Carthy, and I was glad to enable the young couple to take a farm in Connaught, where they have thriven. Captain Rooney—*alias* Connell—was hanged at Ennis in 1829. The smugglers of the Bog of Allen carried on their desperate traffic for some years, frequently taking and losing lives in their contests with the military and excisemen, but our regiment was transferred to the North, and we saw no more of them. Wide indeed is the gulf that separates the Ireland of more than sixty years back from the peaceful and contented Ireland whose prosperity and improvement go hand in hand with our own.

THE RAFFLE FOR THE ELEPHANT.

IT is now twenty years ago that a certain Mr Joseph Fletcher, generally known in Hertfordshire by his sporting name of 'Porky Jenkins,' kept the *Flying Dutchman*, a public-house in the pleasant little country-town of Pipington-cum-Tabor, a little off the high-road, and about a dozen miles or so beyond the sepulchral town of St Albans.

Porky Jenkins had been formerly 'the champion of the light weights,' and the hero of special paragraphs in the sporting papers; but having got old, puffy, and thirsty, and having sold so many fights and so many backers that no one at last could be found daring enough to either front him or back him, he had at last thrown up the sponge, and gracefully retired under the shade of his own laurels, behind the bar of private life. Handsome but for a broken nose, brave but for his fat, virtuous but for a strong disposition to low gambling, Porky Jenkins was respected by his brewer, honoured by the poachers whose game he bought, and feared by every one but his wife.

The *Flying Dutchman* was an inn where many sorts of beer were drawn, and many sorts of business transacted.

Inquests were held in that little wainscoted parlour, and also public meetings; there raffles took place, and there 'the Sons of Apollo' chanted; there bargains were struck; and there foreign wars and home taxes were discussed over gin-and-water. In fact, the *Flying Dutchman* was at once a goose-club, a music-hall, a market-room, a tavern, and a betting-booth.

On the October night I refer to, a raffle was being held—a raffle, I may say, unprecedented, whether we take into consideration the enormous nature of the prize, or the ridiculously low sum that each person engaged in it had to risk. I would give any one from Shrovetide to Shrovetide, and he would not guess what it was the small-tradesmen of Pipington-cum-Tabor were raffling for, that October night in question. A fat goose and a bottle of Old Tom? Not a bit of it. A mangle and a garden-roller? No. A piano and a chestnut mare? But, dear me, I had forgotten; I let it all out in the title of my story. Well, it was, I own it, of all things in the world, that ponderous freak of creation—an *elephant*, and going at a great sacrifice too. It was being raffled for by forty members, who had laid down ten shillings each, and were now throwing dice for the stupendous and rather impracticable prize.

The forty members—Buckle, the saddler; Lacy, the tailor; Duff, the baker; Chickenbody, the green-grocer; Stithy, the blacksmith; Howell, the gardener; with the other thirty-four competitors, were in a state of feverish wrangling and garrulous excitement, partly owing to gin-and-water, partly owing to the heat of competition. Chickenbody, the little weak-minded green-grocer, had actually, in defiance of his acid and 'nagging' wife, bought all the three shares of Porky Jenkins, who had parted with them with feigned reluctance, and only on receiving a *bonus* of one pound sterling and a glass of gin-and-bitters. Thirty-nine white clay-pipes were pointing and nodding simul-

taneously at Chickenbody, who never could smoke, and therefore very wisely abstained—Augustus Chickenbody, who had four chances, and who had just thrown ties with Duff the baker, and was going to throw again for the conqueror. If the elephant had been the Koh-i-noor, or the goose with the golden eggs still alive, Chickenbody could not have been more excited; he forgot at that moment the high price of potatoes, and even his wife, whom he had that night left on plea of urgent business with a market-gardener at Coddlington.

But here I must digress from my main subject, and explain how it was that an elephant ever found its way to Pipington-cum-Tabor, and also why it was put up to raffle, when we all know that people generally only raffle for kettle-holders, explosive guns, rickety dressing-cases, and other small and useful articles. This is how it was. The elephant raffled for was no common elephant, but the celebrated performing animal once belonging to 'THE ROYAL IMPERIAL OLYMPIC CENTRALISATION CIRCUS COMPANY,' who had lately been performing the *Bombardment of Samarcand*, in which piece the aforesaid elephant figured as 'RUNJEET SING, the favourite elephant of the EMPEROR TAMERLANE.'

Now, the Royal Imperial Olympic Centralisation Circus Company had wandered through the home-counties with great loss, and had finally gone to pieces, and been left a complete wreck at Pipington-cum-Tabor. The company had before this rolled on from place to place, throwing over goods to the storm, till little but the bare hulk was left for Mr Horatio Fitzjones De Beverley to steer into port. One by one the tumblers, and riders, and grooms had deserted, till only an elephant, some vans, and a few dresses, an Arab *mahout* or elephant-driver, and Mr H. F. De Beverley himself, were left. The last-named gentleman revelling without money, had, rumour said, so entangled himself in

debt at his quarters at the *Flying Dutchman*, as to compel him to sell his vans, and finally to put up his last elephant for raffle.

There were only three people in the room that night who did not seem to share the general excitement—these were Porky Jenkins, Mr H. F. De Beverley, and the real Arab with the Tipperary countenance. Mr De Beverley, with the plaid and cloth waistcoat, festooned with gold chain, sat especially still in his chair, and preserved an undeviating expression of benevolence.

But while fortune was still poising her scales above the heads of Augustus Chickenbody and Ezra Duff, the air rang with cries of 'Tommy Dods!' 'Odd man out!' 'Man!' 'Woman!' 'Heads, I win!' 'Tails, you lose!' 'One to me!' and other competing cries. The air seemed full of rattling dice. At last, at the third throw, Chickenbody flings sixes. The elephant—the elephant is his! Mr De Beverley announces the fact in the voice of Hamlet's ghost, and Porky Jenkins strikes the table a tremendous blow with a pewter pint-pot, and cries: 'Going, going, gone!' The thirty-nine rafflers crowded round Chickenbody, and congratulated him. Mr De Beverley offered him ten pounds for his prize.

Chickenbody, with his hair slightly over his forehead, which did not, however, disturb him, and with his thumbs snugly placed in the arm-holes of his waistcoat, declared they were 'jolly companionsh every one,' and ordered glasses round, on Porky Jenkins requesting to know what he was going to stand. At a later hour, he begged Mr De Beverley—who had just given the company the love-scene from *Romeo and Juliet*—to 'hand over the elephant,' which the manager said was 'a good one,' and promised that the animal should be sent round in the morning in the care of Abdallah, the real Arab, who would take care of it for twelve shillings a week. A little after

twelve, Mr Chickenbody, scared by the reproachful chimes of St Simon Magus, returned home singing

> 'Th' oak, th' oak, brav' old oak,
> That has dwelt in th' greenwood long—Rule, Britannia.'

His wife unbolted the door, and let down the chain.

'Hurrah, Louisa!' he cried, 'I've won th' elephant; it's coming with the milk in the morning. Won th' elephant—yes, I have!'

'Mr Chickenbody,' said the austere lady, 'I'm ashamed of you! You've been drinking again. Get to bed; you don't know what you're talking about. Get to bed, sir!'

The next morning, Mr Chickenbody was awakened from a pleasant dream by a scream from his wife, who had risen before him, and who was dressed, and looking out of window.

''Gustus! 'Gustus!' she screamed, 'here's an elephant knocking at our door. Why, you horrid wretch, what have you been doing?'

It was too true: the next moment came a knock at the window, and the real Arab, with a white turban on his cocoa-nut of a head, mounted on a huge elephant. Mrs Chickenbody threw up the window and screamed: 'Get away, man; we have nothing for you.'

The man replied, as cool as a cucumber, in his jargon: 'I Abdallah. Massa Chickenbody win elephant. I bring elephant. Where elephant go, Abdallah go. Where am I to put him up, ma'am?'

'Is this true, Mr Chickenbody?' inquired the lady of her miserable husband, who only groaned and hid his head in the bedclothes.

'It is true,' he said; 'the elephant is mine. Have him hid away in the stable, and give the man some breakfast. He'll be useful to drive our light cart, and take round the vegetables.'

'*Take round the vegetables!*' said Mrs Chickenbody in an emphatic voice, expressive of the deepest scorn. 'O you wretch! And is he to drive the elephant in the new cart. What next?'

The whole of the next day was spent by Mr Chickenbody in studying from a book on natural history, borrowed from the schoolmaster of Pipington-cum-Tabor, the habits and customs of his new possession.

'Wonderful animal!' observed Mr Chickenbody to his wife after his first hour's reading—'intelligent animal! and will cost us nothing, my dear, for we can feed him on the spoiled vegetables; and he'll eat leaves, or grass, or anything, Abdallah says; and when we get tired of him, we can make a fortune shewing him about the country, or selling him to the Muddleton Zoological Gardens.'

'Stuff and nonsense!' replied the unappeasable Mrs C. 'You'll ruin yourself with your fancies; you'll spend my hundred and twenty pounds in a month, in merely feeding that monster.'

Mr Chickenbody, obstinate for once, went on reading: '"This gigantic and clever animal has been trained to pile logs, drag cannon, and lay building-stones. Its tusks weigh about one hundred and twenty pounds. The foot of the elephant is admirably formed, and the horny plates of the hoof are arranged on the principle of the common carriage-spring"—— Come in.'

These last words were not in the text, but were the result of a loud knock at the door. It was Abdallah, who, making a salaam, said: 'Massa Chickenbody, Runjeet Sing bery hungry—bery mad, bery bad toothache—want grub. No give grub, he cry "Urmph," and break down shed, everything, and kill somebody.'

'Oh, don't let him kill anybody,' screamed Mrs Chickenbody.

'We'll get him some food,' said the proprietor grandly.

'I suppose a sack of potatoes and a bundle of carrots will go some way with him—eh, Abdallah?'

'Go some way!' snorted the real Arab scornfully. 'Elephant no little cow, no little horse. Runjeet Sing die unless he eat ebery day this. This what Massa Beverley give him six year he have him.'

Mr Chickenbody took the bill of fare Abdallah handed him, read it, and then turned pale, and sank back in his chair.

'Average daily food of an adult elephant—One truss of hay, one truss of straw, a bushel of barley-meal and bran mashed together, thirty pounds of potatoes, six pints of water.'

'Why, it would fill a barn!' said Chickenbody.

Abdallah, quite unmoved, replied: 'And when he perform, one bottle of the best porter, or a pint of sherry—no dance without sherry.'

'We're ruined!' said Chickenbody. 'My dear, you're right. Our income won't bear the strain on it for six months. We must exhibit the elephant, or he'll eat us out of house and home. Why, he's worse than fourteen children and an Irish servant.'

That elephant was almost the ruin of poor Chickenbody. Customers began to leave his shop, and go to Teagle's, at the other end of the town, because the story went that he was going 'cracked,' and had actually bought an elephant, which he fed with the best vegetables, keeping the rubbish for his customers.

The attempt to shew the elephant at a shilling a head totally failed, as all the town could see the enormous quadruped for nothing when Abdallah took him out for an airing. As for the real Arab, he proved a total failure in the light cart, as he always took the new potatoes to the house that wanted the young pease, and the carrots to that which had its heart on vegetable marrows. In fact, he proved a worth-

less, drunken rascal, and was always to be found at the *Flying Dutchman*, holding mysterious conferences with his late master, Mr De Beverley.

The elephant improved Mr Chickenbody's knowledge of natural history, but it sadly preyed upon his pocket, and his wife's never-to-be-forgotten hundred and twenty pounds. It is all very well to watch an intelligent animal sway backwards and forwards, and pick up buns with its proboscis at a zoological garden, when you pay sixpence, and have done with it. But keeping an elephant is no joke. That extraordinary animal with the prominent front teeth, the flap ears, the leathery hide, and the huge gouty legs, had an appetite that would have done credit to an alderman. To fill him was like filling the hold of the *Great Eastern:* he would take a truss of hay for luncheon, and a wheelbarrowful of potatoes for supper. Four pailfuls of barley-meal mash merely served to give him a zest for a light cartful of damaged carrots and red cabbages. He fed himself as if he was putting a cartridge into a breech-loader, such, with all his voracity, was his deliberate care, neatness, and exasperating exactitude. There was nothing doing all day at Chickenbody's but unloading potatoes and barley-meal for this horrible incubus.

Mrs C. got so violent that she used to go on the sly, with a toasting-fork, and prick the elephant by the hour together, till Mr C. told her that, if she touched the animal's trunk, he would probably beat her to death with that proboscis, tread her under foot, kneel on her, and gore her; upon which she desisted.

The horrible creature was always leading poor Chickenbody into trouble. Once it broke down a turnpike-gate, and the unlucky green-grocer was fined. On another occasion, it trod on sixteen fox-hounds, the property of a peppery, pompous baronet, Sir Hercules Wadlington; and it cost Mr Chickenbody twenty pounds to quiet that irascible

master of the hounds. At another time, this monstrosity, in a nocturnal walk, ate two-thirds of a stack of hay, and trod half a turnip-field into a mash; all of which damage its luckless master had to pay for.

'Sell him, massa,' constantly chimed in Abdallah—'sell him; he no good to you; no dance for you; too much eat; presently sore feet, bad legs, swollen jaw; toothache; then he no sell at all. No good; sell him.' I am afraid Abdallah was a rascal.

Unfortunately, in order to sell anything, it is necessary that there should be a buyer. Now, there was not a man in Pipington-cum-Tabor who would not as soon have thought of buying the parish church for an observatory. Mr De Beverley, who still hung about the place, certainly offered ten pounds, but Chickenbody had spent more than that in meal-mashes. In moments of rage and vexation, he thought of poisoning the creature, or tying him on the railway, so as to be run over. But in the one case he would upset the train; in the other, he would require more pounds of prussic acid than any druggist would furnish him with.

One month after the raffle, Mr Chickenbody discovered Abdallah in an attempt to carry off the elephant, and traced him to Muddleton, where he had got drunk. The elephant had been put in the parish pound, whence, by paying a heavy fine, Chickenbody redeemed him. That night, Abdallah, who, when in a rage, spoke with rather a strong Tipperary brogue, was paid off and dismissed, and disappeared for a time from the horizon of Pipington-cum-Tabor with many wild Irish oaths and oriental ejaculations.

It was about this time that Mrs Chickenbody suggested a plan of more economically feeding the monster, that would never certainly have entered the head of her disheartened husband. Mr C. had been much alarmed by the repeated warnings he had received from that active country justice, Sir Hercules Wadlington, not to venture out with the

animal in the middle of the day, for fear of its frightening carriage-horses or alarming ladies.

'Very well,' said Mrs Chickenbody; 'let us take advantage, Augustus, of the old grumpy's warning. Take him into the park, and let him feed there at night. It is impossible to let that horrid creature go on eating into our hundred and twenty pounds, or we shall be in the workhouse very soon. The animal has eaten fourteen sacks of potatoes in twelve days; every sack of potatoes costs us ten shillings hard money. Look here.'

Mrs Chickenbody made a spiteful yet half-melancholy snatch at a bill-file that hung from a bureau near her chair, and handed them to her husband.

He looked on them with gooseberry eyes and fallen jaw. There they were, all the epicure's bills of fare for weeks: trusses of straw, trusses of hay, sacks of potatoes, &c. Total for six weeks, £35, 14s. 6½d.

Chickenbody groaned. 'No income would stand it. He is eating his head off, Louisa.'

'He is eating ours off.'

'But, my dear, what you propose is felony.'

'Pooh!'

'It's trespass. We shall be informed against.'

'Rubbish! Take him out the back way, after dark, as if for an airing; then go up Sandy Lane for a mile or two, till you reach the back gate of Wadlington Park; then drive the wretch in, and let him eat as many elm leaves and beech boughs as he can get through in an hour and a half; then drive him quietly home, where he shall have his six pints of water, and the thing is done. Nonsense about difficulties. Be a man, Augustus.'

'But suppose the keepers see me, and fire at me?'

'Oh, you may suppose anything. Don't be a child, Chickenbody.'

After many unlikely suppositions, and much feeble

remonstrance, Chickenbody was driven out of his little fortress of objections, and compelled to an unconditional surrender. That very night, Mrs Chickenbody drove out Chickenbody, and Chickenbody drove out the elephant, with fear and trembling, up the long dark lane leading to the park of Sir Hercules Wadlington, that terror of vagrants, and enemy of all inferior beings. Our timid little wild-beast proprietor was in a state of peculiar alarm that evening, as there was a rumour that the real Arab and Mr Fitzjones De Beverley had been seen again in the neighbourhood of Pipington-cum-Tabor, and he augured mischief from their contiguity.

It was about eight o'clock of an evening towards the end of May: through the soft twilight, the white May-flowers glimmered, and their scent filled the air. There was no sound but the occasional boom of a beetle, but that nearly frightened Chickenbody out of his wits. They reached the side-gate of the park, and listened. About a quarter of a mile away stood the old Tudor house, shining with lights, for there was a party that evening. Sir Hercules was in all his glory, telling his interminable Indian stories. With a cautious look round, Chickenbody drove in his charge, and tore him down a dozen small elm boughs from the nearest trees, for a preliminary salad. Runjeet Sing ate them as elephants always eat leaves, taking each twig daintily with the tip of his trunk, and tapping it against its fore-legs, to shake off the imaginary dust, before depositing it in the huge red cavern of his mouth. Minutes seemed hours to Chickenbody, as the monster went on with imperturbable deliberation with his cold collation; but at last his great jaws closed, and Chickenbody turned homeward rejoicing. But at that moment, an unlucky incident occurred, that plunged the unlucky little grocer of Pipington-cum-Tabor into fresh difficulties. At that moment, I say, a cornopean, on the lawn of Wadlington House, began

to play with shrill distinctness the popular tune of *Pity Poor Uncle Sam*, which, borne on the night-air, uninterrupted by any other sound, came across the meadows towards Sandy Lane. Now, that particular tune was the one to which Mr Fitzjones De Beverley had trained Runjeet Sing to dance, and the very first sound of it had an extraordinary effect on the unwieldy animal, for instantly setting off, swinging his huge limbs to and fro, in his mammoth trot, he made across the meadows, straight for the lawn of Wadlington House, lured by that siren music. Chickenbody followed afar off, wringing his hands, and tearing the very buttons off his shirt-front in horror and vexation.

There was a *fête champêtre* being held on the lawn at Wadlington House, and a young cornet in the dragoons had played that fatal tune preliminary to the first quadrille. Sir Hercules, yellower and more pompous than a bull-frog, was begging everybody to select their partners. At that moment, there came a crash, as of a runaway wagon, among the laurels and box-trees in the shrubbery, and Runjeet Sing appeared upon the scene, repeating from time to time his one alarming remark, 'Urmph!' and thrashing the air with his proboscis. The ladies screamed and ran; one dandy fell into a veal-pie, and another sat down on a pile of jelly; the cornet dropped his instrument.

Sir Hercules, though a peppery 'old Indian,' was no coward, and at once perceived that the elephant was a tame animal and quite harmless, and rationally concluded that he had escaped from its keeper, who could not be far off. All he had therefore to do was, he thought, to keep it at bay, and prevent its doing more damage than necessary, although even now one enormous foot rested on a bed of Tom-Thumb geraniums, and the other on a promising plot of calceolarias. Sir Hercules, therefore, with great gallantry, advanced upon the elephant, raising his bamboo cane in one hand, and waving the other in the way drovers do when

steering a 'difficult' and rather irascible ox. The instant he did so, to the astonishment of everybody, Runjeet Sing reared himself up on his hind-legs, and paced slowly before Sir Hercules Wadlington, nodding his big head to the tune of *Poor Uncle Sam*, which some violins inside the house, unconscious of danger, were playing. While yet in this attitude, which Chickenbody, from behind a laurel-bush, regarded with mingled horror and surprise, two men broke forth from behind the servants who had come running to the spot; one wore a white hat, banded with rusty crape, the other wore a once white turban. They were Mr Fitzjones De Beverley and the real Arab, who had been invited to a share of the festivities of the servants' hall. They ran forward, exclaiming, half out of breath: 'No, yes—no, yes; it is!'

Fitzjones bowed, and threw himself at the feet of Sir Hercules; the real Arab made a salaam, and did the same. Chickenbody came forward and apologised for the elephant, who had now taken to standing on his head, on a border of hepaticas, and could not be moved by threat or entreaty, till Sir Hercules stormed in and stopped *Poor Uncle Sam*.

'This man,' said the unblushing De Beverley, 'has stolen our elephant, Sir Hercules; he has robbed us of our *little* all.'

'Yes, he big thief,' said Abdallah. 'Massa, he rob elephant.'

'Your proof, gentlemen,' said Sir Hercules, patting the elephant. 'How do you prove this intelligent animal to be yours?'

Abdallah fumbled in his pocket, and producing a round lump of dry clay, spoke half in Irish and half in Arabic to Mr De Beverley.

'My faithful Arab,' said the arch-rogue, 'tells me in his native language that the clay now produced is a careful impression of our elephant's footmark. He will now, if you please, compare the two.'

'Wonderful!' said all the ladies.

Abdallah knelt down and lifted Runjeet Sing's right foot, and for some minutes appeared to be comparing its surface with that of the enormous seal. At last he rose, jumped three times in the air, and said: 'Begor, Salamah, all right, massa. It's our elephant. Him bery big thief.' Here he pointed to the unhappy and trembling Chickenbody, who remained dumb with astonishment.

'Quite enough, quite enough,' said Sir Hercules. 'I require no more proof; it is enough for any court of justice that ever sat on the bench. John, give this man into custody. Good people, the elephant is yours: you may remove it; but you must remember you are bound to appear as evidence when this unfortunate wretch is brought to trial.'

Poor Chickenbody was removed, fighting, kicking, and loudly remonstrating. De Beverley and the real Arab remained to exhibit their elephant, and net some six or seven guineas, after which they made off to the nearest railway station, and transported Runjeet Sing to the great metropolis.

Poor Chickenbody was eventually released, after three adjournments, on the representations of Porky Jenkins, whom some malicious people believed to have been an accomplice in De Beverley's plot. But he never heard any more of Runjeet Sing, and never obtained any redress.

I claim for my story a special moral, comprised in a few words—Never raffle for an Elephant.

THE END.

Edinburgh:
Printed by W. & R. Chambers.

STANFORD UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES
CECIL H. GREEN LIBRARY
STANFORD, CALIFORNIA 94305-6004
(415) 723-1493

All books may be recalled after 7 days

DATE DUE